

Irreversible Processes

Irreversible Processes
(second in a series of four novels)



R. Fred Vaughan

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Irreversible Processes

About the Author

The author was born and raised in the Skagit valley of Washington State. He and his wife reside down a private street in the greater Seattle area. They have raised two children of whom they are very proud.

Mr. Vaughan took his degree in physics at the University of Washington in Seattle. He spent thirty years in electronics research engineering publishing numerous technical articles in the proceedings of conferences in his field for which he received prestigious awards. Several patents have been issued on his inventions.

He has also written many less technical articles and essays that have been published in technical journals, trade magazines, and high IQ journals. He edited a society journal for many years and edited an intellectual blog.

Not unlike his protagonist Ray Bonn, his avocation has been the investigation of alternative theoretical explanations of physical phenomena. His interest in, and opinions concerning, the philosophy of science have motivated much of his writing.

Yes, he is a Seattle Mariners fan and hopes that one day they will indeed win a World Series.

FOREWORD

Irreversible Processes is the second of four novels which together tell an epic tale of several generations of the Bonn family. The individual titles and topics of these novels relate to physical theories: relativity, thermodynamics, cosmology, and gravity. The all too human arguments that ultimately lead to major discoveries in these intellectual fields of study are treated empathetically in respective novels. It is in many ways as though each novel were a tribute to Simplicio, Salviati, and Segredo of Galileo's *Four Dialogues Concerning Two New Sciences* – unwitting participants in scientific debate. The driving force in each novel is scientific discovery, but there is conflict with the outside world of major league baseball, family issues, and internal demons that traumatize endeavors to clarify and publish scientific discoveries. The stories themselves center around human actions, personality, and character. To the extent that a desire exists or arises in readers to understand mathematical formulations, separate technically sound accounts have been relegated to non-fictional volumes; only the human aspects are topical to each novel. Yes, this means that there are eight books in all.

These novels are romance novels in the sense that Saul Bellow's novels are romance novels, i.e., character-driven rather than plot-driven fiction. Despite romantic interludes, these books are not *about* romance per se, rather they *include* romance because we are by and large a romantic species. Prodigious success and misfortune of the Bonn family, like those that befell Job in the Old Testament account provide clarification of character. Plots, to the extent that there are plots at all as against random advantageous or catastrophic events affecting the protagonists as they would the reader, are secondary to the development of the protagonists' character and scientific publication endeavors.

Ray Bonn returns after completing a book signing tour that took him to New York city, where he had appeared on the Larry King Live national TV show. The unlikely success of his book of articles and essays on the strangeness of observed phenomena by relatively moving observers had become his claim to fame. But in New York for a last hurrah, things went awry – a woman. Yeah. You knew that? Well, you didn't know Lesa. Because of her Ray became even more famous for something else – actually several other of his achievements. So that when he returned to his home down that 'serene' little street, serenity was no longer there. Changes that had occurred in New York could not be undone; the arrow of time had left the bow.

Lesa had been scheduled to appear on Larry King Live with Ray to provide the opposition perspective of an established physics community on Ray's more speculative ideas. Ray teased that she had fallen for the 'snake oil' and the snake oil salesman. She readily agreed, but she had not been taken in; she saw the value of Ray's ideas and his abilities – both intellectually and athletically – and had immediately proceeded to exploit them both. She had latched onto an allusion in his book concerning work he had done to explain entropy. Her expertise being thermodynamics, she had insisted on collaborating with him but without accepting co-authorship which had become a source of contention. One side effect was Lesa's and George Steinbrenner's having 'duck taped' Ray to a contract to go up to bat as a Mariner in Old Yankee Stadium. The details were intricate, but they made it stick much to Ray's chagrin. Three generations of the Bonn family would live with the echoes of 'déjà vu' all over again' on account of the celebrity status garnered on that day.

What did Lesa achieve in addition to, or because of, disrupting Ray's life? Celebrity status, a loving family she had not known she had, a Nobel Prize in physics, marriage to her soul mate, and a son.

The value of any novel depends ultimately upon the validity of its appeal to what engages the interest of its readers. This includes irony, inevitability, mystery, sensuality, jealousy, and other usual expressions of human emotional involvement. Without being a main character, Julie Davidson's presence nonetheless looms large as leit motif through the pages which is why the series is denominated '*Not Julie*'. Her exclusion provides an emotional foundation to the flow of events in each novel; she is in many ways the Charles Marlow of Joseph Conrad novels – there but *not* there – to clarify 'what happened when no one else was looking'.

Authentic human intercourse as readers would experience it is what is sought vicariously in fiction. These novels include that as well as an aspect of human experience that is too seldom addressed in this genre but is central to the normal conduct of our modern day lives – intellectual intrigue. As critic, Peter Stern stated with regard to Thomas Mann's epic novel *The Magic Mountain*, "seeing that modern men are as often intellectuals as they are gamekeepers or bullfighters, Mann's preoccupation is, after all, hardly very esoteric". Why then should a novelist be defensive about describing the exhilaration of intellectual discovery, of enlightenment? Nor should promoting the thrill of scientific advancement be anathema. Sinclair Lewis excelled when he finally put satire aside to write *Arrowsmith*, a novel saturated with words and scientific processes his readers had most likely never heard before.

Despite widespread bemoaning of a lack of mathematical ability, vast numbers of the novel reading public have taken courses in modern algebra, calculus, physics, chemistry, biology, and genetics; we understand the appeal of scientific advancement, the unequalled enchantment of scientific discovery, the yearning for truth. No justification should be required for a central theme that is the discovery of alternative scientific explanations of phenomena with which we are all familiar, but whose current explanation has remained technically flawed for centuries. No human emotional experience could be more amenable as the central theme of a novel. The basic equations that are a warranty of the authenticity of the fictional description must be witnessed as surely as evidence is necessary in a court of law. Jurors see a weapon they could not create or use, but its presence is required to execute the case. So there will be a few equations and graphs; they are authentic even though presented merely as evidence.

Scientists are human beings, cut from the same cloth as athletes, farmers, housewives, carpenters, or ditch diggers; scientific acumen does not preclude athletic or other abilities or reduce vulnerability to irrational decisions that affect all our lives. An ability to understand mathematical formulations that explain physical phenomena does not exclude appreciation of the sensual beauty associated with formally described phenomena or the wonderment that goes with such observational experience. Jealousy, empathy, rudeness, kindness and the full range of human behavior and interests are typical also of those who are scientifically inclined. Misfortunes and the awful coincidences that sometimes affect certain lives more than others – the Hyannis Port Kennedys come to mind – does not occur more or less frequently for those with scientific abilities. The Bonn clan was so afflicted although scientifically rather than politically inclined. Scientific ability may amplify associated human emotions due to a fuller understanding of correlated phenomena. Preference for the term ability rather than knowledge derives from the distinction between ‘knowing how to’ and ‘why’ as against a vague familiarity with associated facts.

Yes, of course, there must be a readership market – if a market even matters in intellectual discussion. Some things must be written whether there is a readership or not. Writing for readership rather than what an author feels in his bones would not be good. J. D. Salinger considered his critics and readers a distraction and thus continued to write without publishing his work. But maybe scientists and mathematicians, of which there are many, might just enjoy reading about people who share a similar style of thinking as well as more vicariously about ballerinas,

musicians, ball players, gamekeepers, and bullfighters. Nor should we diminish the pleasure scientific laymen take in vicariously experiencing the excitement of scientific endeavors and the strange implications of the phenomena thereby discovered. The gamekeeper Mr. Millar in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* enjoyed reading about the atomic physics of his day. And why not? Learning about new discoveries of our age and how they were made is a meaningful activity that engages us all.

Not all scientific reasoning included in these novels will be immediately familiar to most readers. But technical discussions, figures, and equations are, without exception, interspersed with associated interpersonal reactions with explanations clarified by the arguments of the protagonists that should enable lay readers to experience the emotional impact and enable them to share the ecstasy of scientific discovery.

Fred Vaughan

Irreversible Processes

MEPHISTOPHELES:

...

*Cheerful sometimes, more oft at heart full sore;
Fairly outwept seem now her tears,
Anon she tranquil is, or so appears,
And love-sick evermore.*

Faust Part I

by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

#1 Settling In

Back in the outskirts of Boston a disconsolate Lesa Landau had chosen to sit alone in the back seat of the black Lexus on her way back from the airport to her father's and Cynthia's home. She was thinking thoughts relating to collisions and chance, but with a more human perspective. There was what she considered the unlikely but fortuitous interactions with Ray Bonn. Then there was the nature of her complicated relationship with him and that no matter how good her intentions, they had always seemed to precipitate unfortunate unintended consequences. But even those had sometimes turned out wonderfully she thought.

She was interrupted in her thoughts by Fredrik asking, "Are you okay, Lesa?"

"Yes, just thinking about Ray," a pause, "and all that's transpired in a week and a half, since I was given his book and the opportunity to meet him."

"You two are on pretty much the same wavelength, aren't you?" It was Fredrik again, the father she had met for the first time this very day.

"Yes."

"You love him, don't you?" This was Cynthia.

"Yes, of course. You know why too, don't you?"

"I do," Cynthia responded, laughing. "He seems tremendously strong and yet vulnerable at the same time in ways some of us need."

Fredrik jerked his head toward Cynthia, who laid her hand on his thigh as he continued to glance back at Lesa.

"Some of us?" he asked.

"It's a woman thing, Dad."

Tensions faded away with the ensuing chuckles. They all knew that whatever they did or didn't know, didn't matter nearly as much as that they were on the same page of some narrative going somewhere now, and that they were part of the same story that had already had a good ending.

"We didn't get your bags in yet, Lesa, and we haven't shown you your rooms."

"I have rooms?" she asked implying that she understood that in the same sense in which a newborn baby girl might have a pink room with white curtains waiting. She had her own rooms in the Sorensen mansion. It was a most pleasant thought.

"Yes, it's your private room... well, *rooms* actually... for as long as you want them, whenever you want them, whatever you want them for." It was Fredrik being the father he had just discovered himself to actually be.

"The entire rest of the house is yours too, Lesa, but we may get in your way occasionally in the other rooms." Cynthia smiled her welcome to the new arrival.

When they did arrive, Lesa bounded out almost before the car had stopped, but she noticed how Cynthia waited until Fredrik had opened her door and given her his hand.

Lesla just stood there then and watched them, making the comment, "A touch of class," stated approvingly as they smiled back at her.

Fredrik got Lesa's bags from the trunk and together the three of them walked through the main double doors, then around a few corners off to the left into a huge wing of the building with a view of the beautiful gardens. There were several adjoining rooms, very much like the suite at the Sheltry hotel, only much more spacious with a much more peaceful view.

"Oh, I wish Ray had stayed a while," Lesa said, and then looking from one to the other. "It would have been all right, wouldn't it?"

"It would have been perfect," Cynthia stated it for both she and Fredrik as they stood holding hands just watching Lesa in amusement. "You can have any guests you like for as long as you like, and we can all dine together unless you choose to do otherwise. You can help me figure out the menus. We would truly appreciate it if you considered this your home."

"Then it *is* my home," an elated Lesa emoted, "no matter where I happen to be."

"Go ahead and freshen up if you like," Fredrik said. "We'll probably be in the sitting room, or else you can come looking for us." They left Lesa then to investigate her new situation, one that would be hers for as long, and as often as she liked.

It occurred to her that she would like to move in here for a while at least. She didn't feel comfortable going back to ASI just yet. She started searching out the right drawers for the few things she had with her. She and Edna had gone shopping a couple of times during her stay in New York at the Sheltry to augment her few clothes and accommodations she had brought with her for what was supposed to have been an over-nighter. The expectation of a single night away from Sommerville to appear on the Larry King Live show had not seemed to require much. But as it had turned out, much had been required.

Before she had her things properly put away, her ring tone sounded. It was Sharon.

"Oh. Hi, Sharon."

"Hi, Kid Sis," echoed back. "You getting settled in?"

"Yes. We just got back from the airport," a pause, "seeing Ray off."

"Back to his wife, huh? Those bastards always do that." She laughed, knowing just how much exception Lesa would take.

"Not all of them." Lesa provided a minimal defense, almost verbatim the response Sharon expected, much to her own satisfaction.

"It's beautiful here, Sharon. I have a whole huge suite all to myself, but it's going to be lonely without Ray."

"So how's your family?"

"They are both wonderful, Sharon. My dad is something very special, and Cynthia is simply marvelous."

"Cynthia, huh?"

"Yeah. She's beautiful, and my dad says she was a world class concert pianist and singer. She played for us, and sang, but," a pause, "I guess I sort of stole it from her." A burst of laughter, another pause and then, "Oh, well, she didn't mind."

Sharon said something about imagining Lesa going ballistic in her new environment.

Lesa responded, "You have to come up, Sharon; they've told me I can entertain all I like. Where are you now?"

"I'm home now. I went with Edna to the airport and just got back. I'd like to come up some weekend, if you're still there. It has been wonderful getting back in contact... and you such a celebrity now."

"I don't know how long I'll be here. It pretty much depends on Ray, but if I'm still here, could you tentatively plan on coming up the weekend after this coming."

"Sure. I *will* plan on it. It sounds like a certainty. If you're staying there until Ray gets off his duff, you'll be there a long time, girl."

"Sharon, you're too hard on him."

"Are you kidding? You think taking thirty years for a slugger like that to make it to the Majors, and then only because you conned him into it, isn't a bit pokey? Think about it Lesa. Edna says he's 'just that way'. He's passive aggressive."

"Don't, Sharon. I'm okay, and meeting Ray is the best thing that ever happened to me. He may be slow at helping himself, but he wasn't slow at helping me."

"Yeah, you're right there, Sis. He did a great thing for you." Then after a pause, "Did you use the DNA swabs yet? I can find out where to take them up there."

"No, we haven't. My father mentioned them to me earlier, so now that I'm unpacking, I'll get them out. Do find out where we can take them. We know the result, of course. He and I just click, Sharon. It's like he and I were always together already."

"What is it with you and older men anyway?"

"Oh, Sharon. This one's my dad. I'm going to see about officially changing half the names in my pedigree to match his. I hate 'Landau' now, as you might imagine."

"Half? You mean a third, don't you?" Sharon laughed. "I never thought I'd catch you making a mistake in mathematics."

"Sharon, for heaven's sake, that's not the point."

"Okay, I'll find out and tell you where to take them next time we talk, not too long I hope."

"No, it won't ever be too long again, maybe tomorrow, is that all right? I should get back to what I'm doing now."

"Sure. Bye then." Sharon was gone, but Lesa was uneasy about Ray somewhere mid-continent, heading into his "purty sunset" out west, she mused, from which he had so recently come into her life.

She reached into her bag to find the DNA kits Sharon had mentioned. The envelopes from Mariners management she had placed in her bag when Ray had opened his, came to her attention as she was doing that. She opened the larger of the two envelopes to find a letter describing how the payment of his contractual earnings could be handled. She scanned it; it seemed self-evident to her with forms enclosed for executing the transfers.

She should definitely have opened that earlier and have given Ray his forms with her signature as his agent before he left. Helen would be sure to ask him about that. There was also another contract enclosed; she looked back at the letter for explanation: They would like Ray to appear at least once more in a Mariners uniform before the home fans. They were open to how he wanted to do that. They preferred a contract for occasional dates as he saw fit throughout the summer, or a single day in the lineup as at Yankee Stadium. They were unwilling to make exactly the same deal again, of course, but some sort of "monetarily beneficial" arrangement for his appearing at SAFECO Field, a lucrative single at bat in a switch-hit role maybe. If he refused all of those options, then at least he should appear ceremonially, for the benefit of the fans. In that case they would like him to throw out the first pitch.

Wow! Ray wouldn't like any of those options, she knew. She should call Helen to let her know that she had the envelope detailing how Ray would receive his money though. She guessed that Helen was in charge of that for the Bonns anyway.

"Hello, Helen. How are you? This is Lesa."

"Oh, Lesa, thank you for calling. Has Ray left?"

"Yes, his plane left on schedule, so he'll be there in two or three hours."

"Umm... When did he leave? What was his flight number? He was going to call me today, after he got it arranged. I thought maybe he had decided to stay over to get to know your father and his wife a little better."

"No. We wanted him to, but he was pretty desperate to get back home. I've kept him away much longer than he was comfortable with, I know."

Helen gave sort of an embarrassed chuckle.

"But he had his flight all arranged this morning early," Lesa said. "I guess we never gave him a moment alone, and well... you know... Ray can be a little absent minded at times... don't you think?"

"Duh! Do ya think?" Helen laughed jovially. "Welcome to my world, Lesa."

That comment definitely registered with Lesa. They both laughed heartily as friends who, Lesa desperately hoped, would increasingly share the hopes and fears of interconnected worlds.

"Well, he left at 6:20 PM Eastern and should get in there about 9:22 local time, I think. Something like that. Alaska Airlines flight number 151; you can check the updated arrival time. But that's not why I was calling really. I wanted to talk to you, of course." Lesa saw Cynthia checking around the corner, where Lesa had left the door open. Lesa motioned for her to come in.

"What I wanted to tell you, Helen," Lesa continued, "and you can tell Ray for me, is that I should have opened those Mariners envelopes last night. Since I'm down officially as Ray's agent," a delay for conversation on the other end. "Oh, thank you. Well, I'm not any more comfortable with it than Ray is, but that's the way George set it up. We can change it; Ray certainly doesn't need me as his agent... well, okay then if you're sure he doesn't mind. But anyway, the gist of this is that I received the forms for the transfer of the funds to Ray's account. I should have signed as the agent and sent them home with him to set up the transfer however he sees fit. I'm guessing he'll have you do that for him though... yeah, 'duh,' again, huh?"

Lesa laughed as obviously Helen must be on the other end and Cynthia (despite trying desperately not to) was as well.

"Anyway, I'll get them in the mail to you, and if you want any help with the forms, just let me know. I am familiar with them, since I have of necessity done some financial planning for myself the last few years. I no longer trust financial organizations, after having been burned a couple of times." A pause during which Helen welcomed Lesa's help.

"Sure, we can do it together. I'll fax you some stuff. I better let you go now then, you've probably got a lot to do... Oh!" She interrupted whatever Helen was saying, "There's also a plea for Ray to sign a contract to show up at SAFECO Field. I'll fax that to you. I wouldn't be in a hurry to show it to Ray though. He'll be pretty negative."

There was some joviality shared and then in a totally different tone: "Helen, take care of Ray. I've been awfully hard on him, I think. He needs you desperately right now, although I think he's crawled so far back into that shell of his that you may not be able to coax him out for a while."

More laughter at both ends.

"Anyway Helen, kiss him a whole bunch and tell him how much you love him..." an appreciable pause and then, "and when you're all done, kiss him one more time just for me, and tell him how much I love him too. You knew that anyway, but it might be fun just to hear him say, "Oh God!" She laughed.

"Yes, I knew that Lesa, and you've been good for him, however hard it was for you to get him out of his rut," Helen said on her end. "And thank you for calling. Let's do it regularly."

"He's the best thing that ever happened to me, Helen. Thank you for sharing him." There was a smile in her voice as she said it, and an even broader

one at whatever the response. "Please call me along. I've got to get back; Cynthia's here. Bye now."

Helen obviously gave a salutation, and Lesa was back with just Cynthia, who showed her admiration for Lesa's communication skills.

"Wasn't that the woman whose husband you're in love with? Your father's first wife was nowhere near so understanding."

"She probably didn't love him as much as Helen loves Ray. We understand and respect each other."

"I suppose that might have something to do with it alright," Cynthia allowed thoughtfully. "But mutual respect in such circumstances is rare, don't you think?"

"I'm sure it is, but love just happens, doesn't it? And when it does, rarity becomes more commonplace. Ray and I can sort of read each other's minds... not exactly, of course, we're scientists after all." She saw humor in that and chuckled. "What I mean by mind reading is that when one is in love like Ray and I are, one is so full of empathetic feelings for the other and the way they think, that the same thought is triggered in both your minds at the same time by the same stimulus. We can carry that out to quite extensive lengths."

"I suppose you're right, but not without a little nurturing, surely."

"Sure, but would anyone who experienced true love and those splendors that go with it not nurture it a little? Aren't love, and empathy, and nurturing all very closely related?"

"Hey, my little darling girl, can I come in and listen in to the interesting scientific lecture on love?"

Lesa responded to Fredrik's light tap at the door jamb with some exclamation involving "Daddy!" and ran to him and hugged him, all to his great pleasure, while Cynthia watched and smiled.

So Fredrik walked into Lesa's rooms and watched with Cynthia as she put away her clothes, each item of which she showed them by stretching it out over her body before refolding it for a drawer. He saw the swabs in their containers lying over by her laptop which was already hooked up to the cable outlet. "I was hoping Ray hadn't forgotten those things."

"No, he wouldn't; he knows how important it is for me to change to my real father... my *rightful* father."

To Fredrik's inquiry concerning the extent to which Peter Landau might not have been a good father, she said. "I assume we have time for me to explain all that later. The first night Ray and I met, I opened up Pandora's box by explaining that as part of what I called my 'dilemma'. It got me off on that tangent. 'Dilemma' was the wrong word for what I was trying initially to explain. I think that maybe I was just trying to get him to realize that I suffered from posttraumatic stress syndrome. I guess that was it, but in any case, he caught on. He's smart, you know. Real smart! He got right on it too, didn't he? He figured out everything about me, and now here I am."

"He seems to have alright," Fredrik said. "But do you really think he's smarter than you?"

"Probably not," she said laughing her loud uninhibited laughter.

"But you needed him..." Cynthia trilled in her lovely voice and then added parenthetically, "That is a lovely song, isn't it? Did you know it was one of Ray's favorites?"

"He certainly did get at my 'dilemma'. I did need him for that, but now I need him even more... not because of what he can do for me, but because I am an incomplete person without him, and I think he will be as incomplete without me. And however intelligent either one of us might happen to be, we're more than twice that smart together. Our thoughts roam freely through both of our minds now. Not having him right near me is almost terrifying. But no, I had not known that song was one of his favorites, but only because I had not had occasion to think about it, or I would have known. You know he needs me too, don't you?"

She paused for Cynthia's empathetic nod and smile.

"Well anyway, now that I've had the major bad parts in my life all uncovered and am having them replaced by marvelous things instead, it's not the 'dilemma' it was, so let's wait. It is a bit morbid for a momentous occasion like today. A thanksgiving." She smiled at them both happily.

"Oh, yes, the swabs," she said back on topic. "You want to do it now?"

"Yep, let's set the record straight," Fredrik said as he took a swab and twirled it around his upper gums in unison with Lesa.

"I sure hope this paternity presumption is correct," Cynthia said, "or I'm going to have to get Helen's number and find out how she does it."

"Not a worry in the world," Fredrik said as he poked the swab back into its vial to give back to Lesa. "She's mine all right."

"Do you think you would adopt me so that you were legally as well as biologically my father, if I asked you both to? You'll understand why I might want to change my name after you've heard the rest of my story, but would that even be a possibility for you both?"

"I would be thrilled," Cynthia responded immediately, "You are the daughter I've always wanted."

"Me too, of course," Fredrik said, "but what about your professional career. Wouldn't changing names throw a monkey wrench into that?"

"Thank you, Cynthia; you're not old enough to be my biological mother, of course, but you are someone my mother would have wanted me to associate motherhood with, I think. You actually remind me of what I remember of her. She was maybe just a little older than you at the end."

Then, looking back to Fredrik, she said, "I don't actually have much 'professional' career yet, do I? I'm just twenty-two. I've got a couple of papers published so far. But my career starts now, with Ray. I'd like to have my new name in the *Origins of Irreversibility* book I'll be working on with him – as having written the forward, and maybe he'll say something nice about me in the front. Probably not, not Ray."

"We'd better move out on these things, then hadn't we?" It was Fredrik. "What do we do?"

"Well, I already received a call from my friend Sharon; she was a roommate of mine at Harvard. She's a doctor in New York. That's where Ray got the kits. She's checking where we can take them up here. I'll find out in the morning."

"Why not tonight?"

In response Lesa picked up her phone punching in Sharon's code. "Hi, Sharon, me again. Did you find out yet?" A delay occupied by Sharon giving directions. "Oh, okay. Just one day here too huh? Good. Thanks. Bye."

"You can drop them off at that hospital we passed on the way out here. They'll have the results back in less than 24 hours.

"Maybe this happy family ought to have some turkey sandwiches then," Cynthia said taking Lesa's hand.

They all proceeded to the kitchen.

The servants were gone, Lesa noticed. Were they just here for the dinner or every day until quitting time? She guessed she would find out soon enough. Right now they all dug into the refrigerator and cut off slabs of turkey to put on bread that Cynthia put out. Fredrik got the mustard with Lesa watching where everything went.

In the evening they sat in their comfortable family room with overstuffed furniture and eventually Fredrik got onto the subject of Maggie, a topic Cynthia had never heard enough about. She had always wanted to know more about this early love in Fredrik's life and he had always had some sort of an aversion to it. He explained it now with seeming ease, from their first childhood meeting through their schooling and play, and on up into that so intense love they had shared. He explained how systematically Maggie's father had forced their separation.

Then later they would meet clandestinely while they were at separate universities. Ultimately, Peter Landau had seemed to Fredrik to have been virtually forced upon Maggie. All three of them sat shedding tears from time to time throughout Fredrik's story. Cynthia touched him here and there much to his satisfaction all the while. Lesa would relate the event fondly to Ray years later.

When Fredrik had seemed to have completed the story up to and including his having read of Maggie's death, been questioned by police investigators, and sorrowfully attended the funeral, the three sat in silence until Lesa got up from her overstuffed chair. She walked over to where they sat on the couch and sat down right in the middle such that they had to scoot apart so that she would fit.

Then Lesa began her horrible tale. She was actually able to express a few more gruesome details than she had given Ray. She revealed everything with both of them leaned up against her to comfort her throughout the tale.

When that was done there was a long silence after which she told them about Ray. How she had come to know about him, how she had fallen in love with him before she had even met him in person, how she had met him, how she had forced herself on him, how she had guessed he would be a good baseball player, how happy they had been at the ballet and the Met, and how

charming he had been... until last Monday night, a week ago. She even explained to them how certain she was that he loved her too but had held himself back from her because he couldn't understand loving two women.

She related how she had angered him by forcing the baseball thing on him, and how happy they were when it was all over. She detailed how sick he had been the night before last, and how she loved sleeping next to him then with only the thin short gown because he had been too weak to resist. She laughed. Finally, she explained how happy he had seemed at being able to help her find and recapture her biological past. Then there was a considerable period of silence after which she said, "Now you know everything."

Fredrik began discussing the adoption option that she had mentioned earlier. He asked what Lesa might already know about the process in cases such as this. They would investigate how it could be done. It was a priority project that all three bought into whole-heartedly.

"But you'll have to promise me...", Fredrik began with a bit of a smirk and waited.

"What?" she asked. "What? Of course, I promise."

"Okay," he said. "I just don't want to find myself swinging for the Green Monster against Manny."

Lesla laughed with the two of them and poked at Fredrik's ribs as he had seen her do to Ray on Larry King Live. "You're buff," she said.

That was how their life together began, and during this blissful late spring and summer the new parents and new daughter would become intimately familiar with careers, achievements, and disappointments of each of the others, such that each wished they were more adept at the skills required by the others.

Lesla tried to learn ballet, getting up to where it would take a full-time commitment to get much further. Her body was ideal for ballet Fredrik insisted, and her progress was amazing, but science, in which she was at the top of her field, should take precedence.

Cynthia instructed her already appreciable skill as a pianist, as well as giving her vocal instruction to accommodate giving an actual performance should she ever wish to perform publicly in that way. "With your abilities, Lesa, you would be outstanding," Cynthia said.

In addition, Cynthia taught Lesa some of her cooking skills that Lesa thoroughly enjoyed as it turned out. She found that she had a domestic side that had been frustrated by not having had a mother in her life. Cynthia was in the habit of doing the cooking most days, the cook who helped on the day of Lesa's and Ray's arrival was only used on special occasions, and even then, it was only to do specific chores as Cynthia laid them out for her. So gradually, and with relish, Lesa took over some of the cooking chores. As far as Bertha was concerned, she came once a week to do cleaning. Lesa was glad she did not have to see her any more often.

In the evenings Lesa walked Fredrik and Cynthia through Ray's *Aberrations of Relativity* book including nuances concerning why various

arguments were so powerful. She could tell that they got a little bored, but they persevered; she thought that they actually understood most of it. Then as she committed with more and more energy to the collaboration on the *Origins of Irreversibility* book, Cynthia and Fredrik empathized with even that, striving to understand nuances concerning entropy as Lesa explained them. Ultimately, of course, they both contributed monumentally to her willingness to participate in a full collaboration.

The Sorensens would enter into considerations of the ups and downs of her rocky relationship with Ray and Helen, both personally and as Ray's agent, both of which aspects would become major emphases and sources of joy and anguish in her life by the end of that summer.

#2 *Going Home*

Ray Bonn lay back in his seat as the last few boarders sought places for their luggage in the overhead compartments; he was going home. Even though his thoughts weren't, the seat itself was very comfortable. His agent had put him in first class without even asking him. Whether it was worth the price of an upgrade no longer seemed to matter; he had struck it rich in the Big Apple. But maybe it should matter. Maybe no longer caring about issues that matter to everyone else is the depravity of riches; what is wrong with a person or class of people who no longer comprehend the realities of others? A lot of questions teased his mind. That is how Ray spent his life, toying with hypotheticals.

Helen acted on such ideas. He most typically didn't. His fast twitch neuronal reaction times that Lesa had used as a criterion for placing him at bat in Yankee Stadium took almost no time, but there were usually no external effects, no irreversible consequences to his thought. Now there were. Smooth running microscopic synaptic collisions that didn't seem to have *really* happened at all as far as the outside world was concerned, a simulated pretend world where there are no associated irreversible changes to complicate things, now had unintended consequences. Although his thoughts kept whirring away with no apparent consequence of their own, they pertained to consequences of previous events, events he had either willed or allowed to happen.

Right now, he wondered about the irreversible changes he had made in the lives of too many people who mattered to him. He had been a party to events while in New York that may have changed everything – probably had. For one thing, he was now committed to collaboration on a book on irreversibility, on entropy. That collaboration involves two people whose paths intersected, collided one could say, during the week of cohabitation at the Sheltry Hotel. As Ludwig Boltzmann argued more than a century ago, ineluctable trends to equilibrium of thermodynamic systems can only be precipitated by collisions of individual particles within the system. He and Lesa Landau had been those colliding individuals. As surely as the interactions of two particles that are mediated by an exchange of energy and momentum brings them into a closer dynamic state, the two of them were now inextricably linked.

Would it be his same old home to which he returned? What would it be like now? Would Helen be the same or irreversibly changed by this 'deluge' with which he had inundated their life-long paradise. He couldn't really

imagine Helen being jealous. But different, no doubt. Would he be the same? Could he even pretend to have been unchanged? Would he be living down what he had considered to be a serene little dead-end street, or would it now be nothing but quiet desperation? Or worse yet, continual commotion. Turbulence. He framed his thought as 'we' like to think of ourselves as internally unchanged by our own thoughts and actions, but we are not.

The plane was barely off the runway before Ray was fast asleep. Both physically and emotionally, he was exhausted. But before they reached cruising altitude, he was awake again. Irreversible effects. Now he had published a book that many people had actually read... purchased at least. He had hit some baseballs a long way... again... to satisfy someone else's expectations of him. And he had committed to collaboration on publishing a book that would explain the arrow of time and why there is no free lunch.

Going up to bat in Yankee Stadium as a stunt would not have met with Adam Bonn's approval. When Ray's brilliant father, had looked at the world, it had quaked with fear. He had come to a beautiful Canyon fifty years ago with a rainbow arched up over it. All the inhabitants had thereafter to be evacuated because he had converted their primordial paradise into a power-producing reservoir for the betterment of society, society at large, for the betterment of a major city over a hundred miles away. Their town was destroyed for a faraway city, for society at large? What was *society*, anyway?

Ray looked out at the pink arc that was the horizon from thirty thousand feet, thinking about his father first coming up the Canyon, up beyond the little town of Concrete, to interview for a job as chief engineer with the Canyon Creek Mining Company. He had gotten that job, but by the time he reached the mine headquarters fifteen miles up 'The Creek', a river by all accounts but name, his actual reasons for coming to the canyon had been transmogrified from those associated with his prospective employment to a vision of his own.

That vision had dramatically struck Adam mid-span as he had crossed the Canyon Creek Bridge, five miles up that major tributary of the Skagit River where the road suddenly switches from the left to the right side of the canyon at the bend. There for the first time, as one gets mid-span, the canyon had used to open up to the north providing a spectacular view through the gigantic riparian menhirs that had stood guard for millennia. Two symmetrical slabs of rock poked up some hundreds of feet skyward from out of the rushing water; they spoke like gigantic vocal cords to Adam Bonn's inner being.

Most who had seen this sight for the first time had been awestruck by the amazing formation that suggested to them a gateway to some long-hidden paradise. Adam Bonn on the other hand had seen it as a most fortuitous buttress for a dam to deliver hydroelectric power to the Seattle metropolitan area from which his roots derived. Many otherwise compatible visions of paradise would thereby be subverted by a single practical man's futuristic dream of power.

Adam had ended up working diligently at the mine, designing structures to support the network of tunnels nearly a mile underground, the hydraulic

systems and electrical interconnections so necessary to a smoothly run operation of that kind. He had married a local girl, and then Ray had come along. But finally, and all on his own time, in his own private workspace at home, Adam had completed laying out the contours of the valley. He had taken endless samples of the rock layers for all of the twenty miles upriver from the menhirs to support the feasibility of his initial vision.

The detailed arguments for the study that he produced were rock solid. He had protected his ideas legally as well as technically. He had even borrowed heavily to buy the land on each side of the river right beyond the menhirs so that the dam would be built on his own land, for which in the end he was remunerated no more than any displaced landowner.

Even as a very young boy, Ray knew more than anyone else about his father's plans, but he told no one. He remembered hoping his father's dream would not be realized. But he did enjoy traipsing up and down the canyon walls with his father, holding the rod with the alternating colors, moving it at his father's signals, and then pounding in the little numbered stakes barely visible to anyone but his father if he needed to look for them later. He also helped his father measure river volumes and flow rates at every time of year at various distances up the river. The forces on the dam at various heights could be calculated and the power output estimated. All this Adam demonstrated for his son. Ray's young chest swelled with pride in his father's abilities. But not his dream.

There were always opened books laid out on Adam's worktable, but this was not a layout anything like Lesa's mother had set up for Lesa's acquisition of knowledge. These were facts, hard and simple, that Adam was incorporating into his tentative design of the dam. That Ray read some of these books was a mere side effect, not the purpose of the proceedings. Although Ray would choose different books as he grew older, he learned the power of books from his father who had books on turbines, electrical engineering, and basic physics texts that seemed generally too preliminary for much use by his father, but which Ray found intriguing. It was the *power* of books on power. There were no novels there, no books of essays, no philosophy, certainly no poetry, nor Greek tragedies. It was the power of books that Ray learned from his father, pure and simple. Ray had acquired his love of all the more subtle aspects of learning on his own... well, from Julie but on his own with his Helen. Well, she was not *his*, it would actually be much more accurate to say that he had always been *hers*. Of course, Helen's cousin Julie had contributed to their interest in more contemporary intellectual books and ideas.

Finally, the day had come when Adam was given audience with the powers that be in the power industry. They were convinced to provide financial backing and government interactions to make his dream come true. But however extreme the success he had ultimately realized with his technical efforts in engineering, antediluvian images of a daily-devoured Promethean figure characterized his personal interactions with townspeople. It had seemed actually to have surprised Ray's father that people, who had come up Canyon

Creek for the paradise or just to work or fish beyond the riparian menhir gate, did not share the ecstasy of covering it all with over a hundred feet of water.

The universal contempt for Adam Bonn was probably never expressed more vehemently than by Ray's then teenage girlfriend, Helen, the other one of what had often been referred to as the 'only-child' twins. She had had the audacity to scream at his father defiantly, "You should be ashamed of yourself; you've fouled your own nest and everyone else's! You've defiled it for all of us." These angst-driven words and concepts of a teenage girl were then co-opted by the entire town. It was a mantra that reverberated throughout the community and emergent environmental groups. Ray had been caught in the middle.

Adam's retaliation was to indiscreetly yell at Ray: "That slutty bitch of a girlfriend of yours has a mouth on her like a toilet seat!" Ray remembered the words verbatim. He had moved out then to live with the Joneses for a spell. He had been sixteen. Ray's mother, whose name was also Helen, after whom Ray's girlfriend and then soon to be wife, had been named, started in on Adam trying to force an apology, finally kicking him out. After that Ray had moved back in for another spell.

Had any of that hassle been rational by either side? Ray found himself wondering now. But if his own immediate family had looked on Adam Bonn with such contempt, it was easy enough to imagine the disdain felt by the rest of the Canyon Creek community.

Now, so many years later, Ray was going home, not to his place of origin up past the town of Concrete on the Skagit River, but to the nest that he and *his* Helen had made near Seattle that he would not defile. Would he? He had been off promoting his own obsession like his father would have, he guessed. Had he thereby ended up fouling his nest and that of others. He could never do that. Could he? He looked so forward to being back in that nest again, with it unchanged, which would probably not be the case. He sighed and soon found restless sleep again; this time for at least a thousand miles.

He awoke to bumps crossing the Continental Divide and by the time the ride smoothed out across Idaho and Eastern Washington his internal malaise was into its usual perpetual motion of thought collisions, motion that was, of course, *not* perpetual, no matter what his illusions. They were running down along with his general musculature, epidermis, hair follicles, telomeres generally, cellular senescence. He acknowledged that these were maybe strange thoughts for a guy who had demonstrably defied age in Yankee Stadium just days before. But they were the real facts, the hard facts. Ever so gradually he was growing old, had already grown old, just like Helen, and unlike Lesa. Vintage matters, he thought. One does not put new wine into old bottles, mend old garments with new cloth. The best one can do is to emulate Chief Justice Holmes' *Wonderful One-Horse Shay* and synchronize the obsolescence. These lessons occur throughout the parables and cliches of holy books, the wisdom of the ages. Imperceptibly at first, but ineluctably nonetheless, one will end up paying for lunch, so one had better not sleep till

noon or bite off more than one can chew, as Ray felt he might have. Thermodynamics. It's the way the real-world works, irreversibility, entropy, all those sorts of things. Don't play at being Noah or Prometheus. Definitely, don't play at being them.

It was Ray's eldest son Jamie who met him outside baggage claim at SeaTac International. Ray was glad to see him again. They hadn't seen each other for three or four months, even though they lived less than an hour apart. Jamie's responsibilities at the university had grown enormously over the last few years, although Ray did not know exactly what they involved. He knew that Jamie had become quite well known in his field and had then been given excessive departmental responsibilities that kept him from much of the research he would like to have been able to do. Ray knew that much.

Jamie's wife was also a prominent figure in neuroscience and a 'fine woman', Ray thought, aware that the phrase was a bit noncommittal. Although he and Helen often referred to her as somewhat *anal-retentive*. She and Jamie hadn't had any children. Ray didn't know why, realized that there was no reason why he should, but he and Helen had sometimes speculated. Such speculations are not usually complimentary, Ray thought, and theirs weren't.

Ray had called Helen as soon as he had landed, apologizing profusely for not having called earlier. She told him that Jamie was already at the airport and would meet him outside baggage claim. Lesa had called to give Helen the flight number and so on, bless her heart.

And so on? Bless her heart?

Ray went out to find Jamie before the bags reached the carousel. He was there. They hugged. Each seemed very glad to see the other. Jamie commented on the 'shades', but seemed to understand, even if he could not resist making insinuations concerning his father's "conceit" and "paranoia".

After Ray had his bags, he replaced the dark glasses with his regular frames, turned to face those awaiting their rides as though waiting for someone, and was swarmed instantly by a Mariner fan club, well-wishers, and autograph seekers, who swarmed about him and Jamie's SUV. Ray signed an *Aberrations* book, the back of a ripped envelope, scratch papers, and a pretty arm which he feared might end up being perpetuated as a tattoo, all before hopping in the front seat to escape and then yelling for Jamie to get them "out of here".

Jamie drove off quickly saying, "Okay, okay, I get the idea!" But he had enjoyed the scene. They were both laughing and slapping hands. "You've been having too much fun, Pop."

"Not really, Jamie," was all Ray could say after an appreciable delay with Jamie looking over at him. They drove on for a while in that same silence.

"How's Judy?" Ray asked, finally, remembering her name. Janice was what had kept coming into his mind for some reason.

"She's fine, but she has a big day tomorrow."

"Allie and Tom?"

"Oh, they're fine. They and the kids are at the house with Mom."

"Eddie?"

"He's there. And he has a significant other with him too."

"Significant other?" Ray thought about that twist of wording a little while.

"Is Eddie gay?" Ray seemed shocked that possibly he had been oblivious to yet another important aspect of one of his children's lives.

"No, no, no! For God's sake, Pop. He's always been a lady's man. You know that." He laughed at his father. "No, she's just his version of 'Lesa'." He looked over at Ray with a smirk.

"Oh, God," Ray said, seeming to be right back where he had used to be as far as expletives went. "What is *that* supposed to mean?"

"I dunno, Pop; it's just what he calls her."

With significantly punctuated silences and innuendoes they arrived down that lonely little dead-end street, where Helen and Ray had lived serenely all to themselves for several years now. Had it been a *quiet desperation* rather than serenity? He wondered. Today the drive was lined with cars, and he could see through the front window that there was a house full of people. "Who all's here?" Ray asked, annoyed.

"Relax, Pop, for Christ's sake. It's just a small token of the fifty million people you wowed when you won your fifty million dollars the other day. Everything comes in millions for you now, Pop."

"Oh, God." Ray was so tired. "Do you know what time it is where I've been?"

"Yeah, well... you ain't in Kansas anymore, Pop, and this little patch of pavement ain't no yellow brick road. It's only ten o'clock here."

The rabble inside had apparently seen them arrive and had let Helen come out first. She was just as he remembered, the beautiful woman of his vintage. Her scent was so much as he remembered. He squeezed her tightly, whispering, "Oh, Helen. I just want to be here alone with you forever. I am so tired, and so happy to be home in your arms."

"Me too, Darling," she said. Then she whispered, "We'll be alone before long now and for a long time after that."

"Why'd you ever convince me that I was a writer?"

"Because you are."

Ray pushed her back to look at her. They smiled and kissed one more time. There were camera flashes then at which he jumped. "No more cameras tonight, please. I am so tired of cameras."

There were no more. All his children and grandchildren and friends including his good friend Andrew greeted him in their various ways. Ray was actually very happy to see each one of them, no matter how tired he was.

Eddie brought his significant other to the fore. "Lisa, this is my father, The Bambino." Everyone laughed.

Ray made a show of looking her up and down to the merriment of all, and indeed, show or not, she was strike-me-dead beautiful, he thought. "I'll bet

that's even spelled correctly; you are absolutely stunning, Lisa. Eddie, you have struck gold."

"It's spelled with an 'i'," she said, all with a very charming manner of speaking. "I'm thrilled Eddie let me come along for this occasion. I feel really special."

Then Allie was back for more hugs and they walked in together with Helen rejoining them. The three of them sat on the couch, Ray in the middle with an arm legitimately around each of two women he loved. Allie's children, Stephanie and Cecil were at his feet looking up at him with admiration he did not think he had ever felt from his grandchildren before.

Jamie said, "Tell us what it was like."

"Yeah, Grumps. How'd it feel when you hit that upper deck over the monuments?" Cecil asked.

Ray reached into the vest pocket of his jacket pulling out the photo of him mid swing, the one that was left after giving the other to Ricky's son. He signed it and gave it to Cecil. The one of his face in the thirteenth inning, he also signed and gave to Stephanie. "Here's Grumps, kids. Two pictures are worth two thousand words, right?"

"Yeah!" Cecil yelled. The pictures circulated around the room in the hands of their new owners.

"Not so easy. Pop. We want a couple of the thousand-word versions, not just pictures. We've seen pictures, frame after frame of you slamming balls up over walls and fences. But what was it like going up there after thirty years? I wasn't that bad at hitting in high school and I couldn't imagine having to go up to bat in Yankee Stadium. What on earth is that like?"

"It was hell, Jamie. You knew I was angry at Lesa, for getting me into that God-awful mess." He paused and added parenthetically, "The Lesa that spells it incorrectly, that is. She was worried about it too, about her wheeling and dealing, I think, and not knowing what she had got both of us into. So, we had a hell of a week going in – you know how it is when you live in the same space with someone with whom you're at serious odds. Well," he paused, "hopefully you don't know. And each at bat... well... it was just stressful. That umpire laughing like an idiot when I first stepped up there irritated me, bantering with Pasao every time up, and all that. But I guess in the end it all worked out okay."

"Your Mom told me you got a bit bored after the third home run, Jamie, and didn't call her anymore. I assume you went to bed?"

"No, I didn't go to bed. It was just that, after three times in a row I finally figured out that it isn't a major surprise when you hit a home run."

"Well, you shouldn't buy in that easy. Anything can happen on a given day. Anyway... more than half your inheritance came after that."

The response could have been canned laughter, Ray thought. Tinny.

"Seriously, every at bat was emotional hell with real pressure building toward the end. By the time it was over... well... I guess your mom would have told you, I was pretty sick the night before last. I was still weak yesterday,

but I felt a lot better today. Now I'm just tired. Exhausted. So... that's what it's like, Jamie."

"When do *we* get to see number fifty go up to bat?" It was Allie's husband, Tom.

"Well, Tom, I understand they are already putting out CDs, so I expect that you can see the fifty-year-old up at the plate as much as you can tolerate. I'm pretty sick of it myself." Ray managed to smile.

Helen interjected, "You're not fifty."

Then Eddie's Lisa asked, "Did you enjoy the book promotion tour?"

"Thank you for remembering I went to New York as a writer, Lisa. Somebody remembers I'm a snake oil salesman instead of a Major League Baseball player. I prefer that actually." He appreciated her changing the topic. "But I didn't really enjoy that all that much either. I'm just a discontented old curmudgeon, I guess. It was pretty tedious after Helen left me in Dallas. I had to eat breakfast with just Edna and me every morning with her runny damn eggs and marketing pep talks. Well, until Lesa got thrown into the mix and took over the conversations. Then all hell broke loose."

"Doesn't it give you a sense of pride though, that so many people acknowledge the significance of your ideas?"

"Yes, it does, of course. I liked that, but even that gets old." Then to Eddie, "Eddie, she's a keeper."

"Yep, and she's already kept! Keep your hands off of this Lisa."

Ray was taken aback. There was a lot that came to mind as a response, but none of it that he really wanted to say to Eddie. Eddie was his son.

"Do you want some coffee and cookies, Honey," Helen asked. "We've got a bunch of your favorite kinds in there."

"Cookies? Yeah, I'll have some cookies." Then Stephanie ran off to get her Grumps a chocolate chip and a peanut butter cookie before passing them around the room.

"What's Lesa doing now?" Allie asked after a bit, and amended the comment with, "the one with the wrong spelling that is."

"Well, we met her biological father today. She'll be staying with him and his wife Cynthia for a while in their palatial 'cottage' up near Boston, I guess. I think finding her biological father was probably more significant, on any proper scale, than beating the Yankees or selling books, either one."

#3 *The Lecture on Love*

There was a lull in the conversation then.

"Do you love her?" Eddie asked, impertinently.

Ray turned to face Eddie to understand, if he could, the depth of his problems he was having with his father. What might he have intended by his earlier insinuation with regard to Ray "keeping his hands off" his girl? Now this impertinence.

Defiantly he replied with a simple, "I do!" He held Helen's shoulder firmly and squeezed it a little as he said it.

Helen smiled calmly as she gazed back into his eyes trustingly, and then got up to start the cookie plate around the room again. There were no takers this time. Here in the middle of the night it was High Noon. As Ray considered the increasing levels of Eddie's impertinence, his anger rose. "I'm tired of smug innuendoes, Eddie, so let's get this ugly thing out into the open. Shall we do a little preparatory research, Eddie?"

"Whatever," Eddie replied.

"Well, let me ask you and everyone else here something just so I know I'm not stuck on some archaic definition of what the hell love is all about. Look around this room and identify anyone you *don't* love... in at least some sense." He paused.

"I suppose Lisa may not know everyone here, so should we exclude you, Lisa? Have you met Andrew and Charmaine?" After a thoughtful pause he added, "Or should I ask Eddie whether you can participate? Do you think he'd be okay with it?"

"Oh, yes. I *have* met the Watts," Lisa said. "We had a very pleasant conversation about how Andrew got to know you, and how long you and Helen, and he and Charmaine have been friends. So I would not like to be excluded, unless Eddie wants me excluded, because I think I sense where you're going with this, and it's a ride I would like to take with you all, since I think I love you all, already." She smiled to applause.

"Wow!" Ray said. "You know what, Eddie? As we were driving here from the airport, Jamie told me that you had your 'significant other' here. I was shocked because it seemed to me as though a good father would have known whether his son was gay or not."

Everyone laughed and Eddie knew it was payback time.

"Jamie brought me back down to earth, of course. That was stupid of me. I did recall that you had seemed to be wired differently than that. In thinking about it, it did seem as though there had always been a girl hanging on your arm. Never any boys. And while I admit to being enough of a redneck to have appreciated that, I never got to get my hands on any of them, Eddie. What is it? Did we raise you to be selfish?"

"Okay, okay! For God's sake," Eddie squirmed amid the laughter.

"In fact, however, Jamie told me that you called her, 'your version of Lesa,' whatever in hell that's supposed to mean. I think Jamie actually said, 'whatever that's supposed to mean.' I guess maybe I get that now – same name, different spelling. But let me tell you, Eddie, in case you don't know it yet, she ain't *nobody's* version of anybody else. She's for real. Treat her nice." Then, looking at Lisa, "Thank you, Lisa. Make sure he treats you nice."

There was a little laughter, but more than a little awkwardness.

"So, we all love everyone then, even if we get a little irritated now and then, right? Why else would we all be here, huh?"

"Anyway, I don't think it's necessary to know *everything* about someone in order to decide whether we love them or not. We can love someone without knowing *everything*... like even whether they're gay or not." Ray paused before continuing, "or 'laying a hand on them', as you so poetically put it. So, unless you want out Lisa, I want you in."

Ray continued, ignoring Eddie now. "Two weeks ago, if you had asked me whether or not I loved Edna Robinson, my representative of McGregor, I would have said, 'No, absolutely not!' This morning I decided she was okay, someone I *do* love. You couldn't believe how kind she was, even if I hadn't known it. Looking around this room now, I can't see anyone here I *don't* love – a lot. Most of you I've loved for a long time. I guess that is indeed why you're all here." He smiled. "And, no, I haven't gone gay on you, Andrew."

"Now I know that's not what *you* meant by your question, Eddie. I'm not going to play shrewd little Irish leprechaun, tying ribbons around all the trees in the damn forest for you while you try to find whatever in hell it is that you think I might have buried under one of 'em; I'm not that subtle and I'm too damn tired right now to even try. But if you want to change my direction, you can clarify your question for me, 'cause I'd like to know where you're coming from."

"Nah, forget it," Eddie said irritated, intuiting that he wasn't going to get a straight answer. "It's none of my business anyway."

"I *can't* forget it, Eddie! No one in this room will *ever* forget it. You know that, don't you? It's out there. 'Remember the night Eddie Bonn asked his old man if he loved that *other* woman in front of all of us? Ha ha!'" Ray imitated the inevitable gossip. "It's out there now, Eddie! You put it out there." So since it's out there hanging like a dead cat on a barbed wire fence, I'm going to skin the damn thing for you and you can do an autopsy, whether it's your business or not. It's the only way I know."

"Yes, I love Lesa, and I love her a hell of a lot, so get used to it. But I love her differently than I love Andrew, of course, and differently than I love you, Kid, and certainly differently than I love your mom. So get over that shit! Each loving relationship is unique. Unless it takes into account the uniqueness of that relationship, it isn't love, it's something else. And I don't have that *something else* going with Lesa. To tell you the absolute truth Eddie, I don't know exactly how to describe my love for Lesa, but yes, I love her."

"It's all right!" Eddie said, emphatically, irritated too. "I'm sorry. All right? I was out of line. What you do is your business."

"You were out of line all right, but no, Eddie, it *isn't* all right!" Ray used an overbearing fatherly tone now. "I don't even know how or how much I love Lesa and now I have to tell you what I don't even know myself."

"Of course I know what you meant. No one in this room is stupid. You're thinking about '*making* love.'" Ray did the universal finger wiggle quotation indication here, "that we sometimes defile that same word to connote. But before I go there... and I will go there." Seeing Eddie's growing irritation with him, Ray continued, "Oh, yes. I'm going to go there with you, Eddie; you ask Ray Bonn a question, and by God, you're going to get an honest answer. I'm not just some stupid Willie Loman coming home from another sales trip and happy occasion with a floozy off in the big city, okay?" He was tired. Eddie, hanging onto this thing for so long, aggravated him.

"I had issues with regard to the audacity of kids asking who I loved in grade school. They all knew who I loved, but I didn't like it. We're grownups now Eddie, me... and you, too. And I still have issues with it."

"So, anyway, now that we're all on board the love boat here, let's go for a cruise. You all know Lesa (spelled incorrectly) is already on board. So, scoot over Eddie, she's in here with us tonight. I think I know what her answers would be to the question I asked you all, so I'll answer for her. Her answer is, 'Yes'. She would love you all the minute she met you. And yes, you can even put your hands on her, Eddie, if it's all right with her, and that's the important point. I would have hoped you knew that. And if it wasn't all right with her, she'd kick your ass anyway."

"Some of you have suggested to me on the phone or by e-mail that you would like to have had presentations on the *Aberrations of Relativity* like those I give on my snake oil sales promotion. I have taken that to be just a very polite way of saying that you're proud of me, *not* that you have any sincere interest in relativity or Ray Bonn's opus. If you *really* want to hear one sometime, I'll try to oblige, but there's really no need, because I have lived my whole life understanding that my thing is not of much interest to most of the known world. That has worked out for all of us for a long time, I think. I love you all, for what I referred to in the acknowledgements of my book as your 'marvelous toleration' of my idiosyncrasies and inappropriate lapses of attention, of which I am very sorry. (I should have played baseball with you Eddie. I know that now.) Happiness, and even love, depend on just such toleration. I haven't ever thanked you all enough for it."

"However, one doesn't typically have sons and daughters worrying about their father being '*magnificently tolerated*' by another woman. No. They worry about whether it's *more* than that."

"I said I was sorry. I don't want to hear it," Eddie interrupted.

Totally ignoring him now, Ray went on, "Love doesn't necessarily have to involve carnal activities, does it? Because if it does, this discussion is over. There were no 'carnal activities'. Period. I'm not sure engaging in those activities even constitutes what one could rightly consider in the rubric of love rather than a mere mating activity of some sort anyway? I don't know. I don't have experience in that area. So no, Lesa and I did *not* 'sleep together' in any biblical sense, although," he paused, "to be perfectly honest, the night before last she came into my bedroom in the middle of the night breaking every prudish rule I had laid down, because she heard me puking my guts out."

"I already admitted to loving Lesa, so what did I mean? Sure, it can get confusing about what kind of love has happened. I will readily admit that Lesa, and at times I, myself, did get a bit confused. But importantly, I don't believe we ever let it take us any distance down any wrong roads. Okay?"

"Okay then, getting more specific, let me ask each of you a question. If your hand isn't up, your answer will be considered to be a 'No'. That question is: Which ones of you read my book all the way through several times in a matter of a day or so before I appeared on Larry King?"

"Lesla Landau's hand is up." Ray looked around. "No other hands?"

"Well that was the beginning of our unique relationship. She read it so thoroughly that she understood it as well or better than I do."

"How many of you even read my book cover-to-cover before last Thursday night?" He paused to look around the room again. "Good work, Andrew, thank you." Ray smiled at his justifiably proud friend, and added, "I thought..."

He paused between words because he noticed that Eddie's Lisa had her wrist bent upward without having fully raised her arm. Ray saw the shy gesture and placed an, "Oh, God," in his thoughts between spoken words, "... you might have, Andrew," he finished awkwardly

Ray stopped and looked down realizing the recrimination of these two unrelated exceptions that he was directing toward his immediate family that he loved so much. Lisa flushed, seeming to sense having been an instrument of that.

Allie addressed Lisa, "You read the whole book before last week?"

"It's a best seller, Allie! Do you have any idea how many copies of that book have been sold?" Lisa said, excusing her obscurely inappropriate conduct, and then, "I really enjoyed it! I learned a lot."

Eddie looked at her as though, he too, was shocked that she had actually read it.

"I'm sorry, Daddy, I should have!" Allie blurted out with tears welling up in her eyes now.

Ray put his arm around her. He was very embarrassed now for having gotten carried away... again. Oh, God.

It was very awkward for everyone else as well. Jamie spoke up and said, "I'm ashamed to say this, Pop, but Judy read it too, and she told me I should be ashamed of myself for not having read it before this last weekend. I *am* ashamed. It's a classic piece of work."

Ray leaned forward, his forehead resting on the base of his palms, his elbows on his knees. His weariness was caving in on him. Eddie said, "Pop, I'm really sorry. I don't know how my head got stuck so far up my ass!" There was some laughter as Eddie continued. "I'm starting to get it though. Please forgive me, and tell us what you were going to, so we will begin to understand you... and Lesa, better."

Slowly Ray lifted his head. "Thank you, kids. It is so easy to love you all, and your mother, who knows everything there is to know about Ray Bonn without asking, or being told, or reading about it, because she invented him... and re-invents him every time he needs it." He looked back at Helen. They smiled warmly and then embraced emotionally.

"Eddie, when you told me about my not having played baseball with you when you wanted me to, excusing myself as being '*too old*', I realized how much I'd cheated you kids, just by being unwilling to spend *my* time doing what I knew you would like me to. I didn't relate it to this at the time, but I should have. I sure can't blame any of you for not being anxious to work your way through my heavy stuff, when I have been so stingy with my time, at even playing and having fun with my delightful children when you were younger! Now my grandchildren," he ruffled Cecil and Stephanie's hair as he had never done before, leaving a hand on each of them for a moment or two. "I have certainly undervalued all your truly 'marvelous tolerance' that I bragged about so pompously without even acknowledging that it was love. I had no right to speak so glibly of something I didn't understand. I'm sorry."

"Tell us!" Eddie insisted. "You can't quit on us now. Lesa came through for you, and for us. Big time! Tell us about all that time you spent with her – the good times and the bad. We'd like to know."

Ray sat back and everyone seemed a little more relaxed then. After a rather long pause with a few unnecessary yeses around the room he began again.

"In reading her assignment of *Aberrations* Lesa found that I addressed problems the way she does – in chunks, I guess. That's just a coincidental fact, I think. She not only agreed with what I had to say when she read it but insists that she felt as though the arguments were her own, or at least the way she would have made them, not as virtually anyone else would have. You heard her say that. It's because she thinks about issues in the physical sciences the way I do. Now I've read *her* stuff, and I feel the very same way about it, not that I've been persuaded, but that I always felt that way. Probably it's just a similarity in philosophical outlook.

"Before that first Larry King Live show, she came to the bookstore to get a glimpse of the guy who wrote that physics book. I was having a little

difficulty with an analogy while she was there, so she came to my rescue with her communication skills and her understanding of my intent. I looked over the crowd of people and the help had seemed to come from two blue eyes way in the back. I was amazed at how my own opinions could come at me with an enhanced, more resonant echo, and quite frankly those eyes just swallowed me up. Right then it reminded me of the eyes of the old Chinaman in Steinbeck's *Cannery Row* – some of you must have read that – where the old man's eyes just opened up like double church doors. That's exactly what came to my mind, that I was being swallowed up. I was tired; I was worried about the show coming up that evening; and I really wanted to get the hell out of New York."

"You *were* swallowed up," Helen said laughing.

"Yeah. I watched in amazement as she explained how behavioral aspects of relativity had been extricated from presumption by my approach, describing it just as I would like to have been able to myself. It seemed as though I had been transported to some unity behind those doors and was looking out at the world from an entirely new direction, her perspective. I can't explain that; it seems a bit corny, but that's the feeling I had that is essential to the whole situation, I guess. Ever since then, in dealing with issues of relativity and irreversibility that we're dealing with now, I have a different perspective. It's like I now have two perspectives. That gives an added dimension to what I'm working on. I guess the analogy would be the 3-D vision that we get with the joint perspective of two eyes.

"During those first few days, she read the entire book over to me aloud. We addressed any issue she had highlighted as being either something she didn't fully understand, or that she thought was insufficiently covered. By the end of that, which involved many hours during which I played solitaire, and biphle and just sat listening, I guess I was thoroughly reinterpreted. If I read a technical passage anymore, it is her voice that I hear it in. I probably always will. I'm not sure whether there was even a voice in similar situations before.

"How could one not love that sensation of mutual understanding? Sure, there was infatuation with her personal appearance too. I can't deny that. Even at the bookstore I was overwhelmed with wanting to sit down in some quiet place with that person and communicate at a level I had never been able to with anyone else on earth on topics in physics that interest me. With Lesa I've been able to do that."

"On earth?" Allie asked. "You've never seemed 'other worldly'."

"No, of course not," he responded. Her question made no sense to him.

"But then you all saw the show and heard Helen strap me in for another go round of that mutual understanding with regard to irreversibility."

Helen nodded with a shrug and Ray added the comment, "That was just your mother's understanding of what I must need and a demonstration of her unselfish love."

"Are you sure that's what it was?" Helen interjected as interrogative.

"Wasn't it?" he asked. "If not, then what was it?"

"That's close enough," she said having salvaged some mystique.

"Well, anyway, Edna did hole Lesa and I up together, so we could collaborate more or less as Helen suggested – for whatever reason." He conceded his lack of a full awareness of those reasons. "It was a dumb thing for Edna to do, I think, but that's how she operates, without asking. And it did force us to communicate even when we probably wouldn't have otherwise. I have to assume that there were no suites available with three bedrooms or she would have monitored everything. That's how she works.

"After she gave us our assignment – yeah, that sounds stupid too, but that is how Edna works. Lesa threw her arms around her, sobbing. But Edna, being Edna, just walked off and left her standing there with tears and mascara running down her cheeks.

"I didn't know what was wrong with Lesa, so I asked. That was the wrong thing to have done, because she responded by running over and putting her arms around *me*. I was shocked. That wasn't who I thought Dr. Lesa Landau was. I comforted her a bit until she calmed down. I knew the entire situation of being locked up in a suite with some strange man you've just met had to be as awkward and stressful for her as it was for me. Besides, she had been up all the previous night – yeah, my book, and that doesn't help your reactions much.

"The response to my querying her was that she had some 'dilemma' relative to ASI. But when I asked her to explain it, that wasn't what she started into.

"For 'background', she sat down and told me her entire life story, beginning with her mom and dad and their unhappiness, and how she had been tutored to extreme intellectual capabilities while still what most would consider barely more than an infant. Then there was a mysterious and very teary version of the deaths of her parents, part of which you probably saw on TV the other day. This was interrupted by several instances of sobbing. That isn't stuff I'm very good at."

"Post-traumatic stress syndrome," Edie's Lisa uttered very quietly.

"Yes, of course. I suspect she had watched while her father killed her mother. But she didn't tell me that. She avoided all mention of how they died."

Some in the room hadn't known about that and seemed to reel back at this comment. But Ray continued.

"You heard about her having gone to Stanford University and Harvard grad school, setting earliest-ever records all the way, and securing that prestigious post-doctoral position at ASI.

"The night Edna and I fly into New York, Lesa is asked by her boss there at ASI to go up to the Big Apple to represent establishment in *shooting down* a bumpkin snake oil salesman from out West, as some sort of initiation for bigger things to come in her career. She decided during the night as she read *The Aberrations of Relativity* that she couldn't, in good conscience, shoot the book down. She had allowed herself to fall for the snake oil, to say nothing of the bumpkin from out west who sold it, I guess. So, she had the aforementioned dilemma. She was worrying issues of loyalty and betrayal of her mother, her boss, and now me – split loyalties.

"I *was* weirded out, okay? I couldn't think of anything to do but sympathize. I told her everything would be different in the morning. You don't learn these things by getting to do them twice." He paused until finally the furrows left his brow.

"Day two started with her already up and off in her private rooms showering when I woke up. I was in my own rooms, about to go from my bathroom back into my bedroom when I noticed... there was Lesa... all dressed and ready to go to work, leaning against the door jamb of my private bathroom, just watching me. I freaked out and yelled at her that she was *never* to come into my rooms again. After one more time with me going ballistic, she never did do it again... until Sunday night when I was so sick."

"What was the other time?" Allie asked.

"It was a similar situation, nothing big. She came in unannounced to ask me something and I exploded, so she just cheerfully went out. The next time I opened my bedroom door to go into our main room, she had her nose pressed up against my door. It freaked me out." Ray chuckled. "She pointed down to the line where the carpet changed and told me that she would *never* violate my 'sanctuary'," Ray did the finger twitch to indicate the use of quotes, "again. She stuck with it too, until she thought she had to come in to check on me yesterday morning."

Ray stopped momentarily here, looking over at Helen.

"I kept your mother posted with status on all this by the way. I didn't know what to do about it, and I don't think you did either, did you, Helen?"

Helen shook her head, rolling her eyes.

"That's enough. I'm really tired."

"Please keep going," someone said and then the room unanimously agreed. Reluctantly Ray went back at it.

"That damned second Larry King Live show. Jesus. That was awful. Clearly, Lesa has issues." Everyone laughed. "Well, it was, and she has. She told me between segments that she would explain her wheeling and dealing behavior with Steinbrenner when we got back to the suite, but she didn't. So, from Monday night till Saturday night when she finally explained what it was that she had been up to, we were at each other's throats. I mean it was tense... *intense*. Edna had a peacekeeping purpose to her life those days... and she isn't all that good at it. No one would have worried about whether Lesa and I loved each other during any of those days, I'll tell you that much, Eddie."

"What *had* she been up to?" Allie asked, amid some laughter.

"I don't think I get it yet. She had this notion about reaction times and psychometrics being done with chronometrics, of course, but I don't think that was really what it was all about. I'll have to think about it some more, I guess. The baseball on my book didn't help. It had more to do with her gut feeling that I had this supposed *capability*, and yet always seemed to shoot myself in the foot instead of 'winning'. She thinks I should have been a member of King Arthur's Round Table in the physics community instead of just a knight-

errant... or crackpot peasant. Something like that. She doesn't understand the concept of 'failure being the sweetest victory'," he laughed. "But she's young."

There wasn't as much laughter in response to this as Ray thought there should have been.

"Well, anyway she and Pasao got me irritated to the point that winning that stupid game mattered even to me, I guess, whether I knew what she was up to or not. Maybe that had been her plot, huh? I doubt if even she knows"

"It mattered even to you then, Ray?" It was Helen. "I thought they always mattered to you – every single one back in high school."

"Yeah, once I was forced to be there, it mattered to me. Pride, Helen. I'm a Bonn, remember. You know my affliction? Remember what a bad sport I was in high school? Losing that basketball game was tough. I don't like losing." He laughed along with Helen.

"You mean you lost just *one* basketball game in high school?" It was Lisa's prescience again, but it was clear from the questioning looks around the room that even his children may have been unaware of that.

Helen beamed as she recalled the occasion. "Yes. You were a *very* bad sport."

"Yeah, well. All those dreams of yesteryear come flooding back," was his response. In his weary state, his use of the word "flooding" seemed highly inappropriate and agitated him further.

"Edna told me afterward that I'm a lazy sloth that has to be pushed into having any ambition at all. She blames you, Helen, for going easy on me, of course. Well, maybe. You've been very easy on my mind... and I really appreciate it." He smiled fondly at Helen again.

"She doesn't know you very well, does she?" Helen grinned.

"I really don't know, Helen," was his response. He *didn't* know.

"Anyway, during the previous weekend, before we were quite so easily spotted, we had gone out on the town to a ballet one night and to the Met on Saturday with Edna. I saw more signs of post-traumatic stress disorder in some of Lesa's comments. A few more clues came to the fore with regard to her parents, so I did some internet sleuthing and e-mailing when Lesa and I were in our rooms and got some further information on her past. I sent out a dozen or so e-mail inquiries to various people that I thought might know more about what had happened.

"During that week that we were at each other, in addition to the work we were still able to accomplish together toward this 'collaboration'." He paused thinking about her continuing reluctance to fully participate. "I got responses and data on the background of her parents. I kept it hidden from Lesa. There were facts to substantiate my surmising Lesa was *not* Peter Landau's biological daughter. Peter Landau was an ogre by the way. Reading responses to my queries, I understood Lesa a little better. I couldn't help but feel a certain amount of the empathy that I had felt that first night and weekend. But you couldn't have determined that either of us was fond of the other from either of our behavior. We were definitely at odds.

"Saturday came. I hit some home runs. I'm sorry; it sounds vain, but it's what I do, what I've always done. The one thing I'm good at. So, I did it. I was lucky, motivated by youthful dreams sure, and every other God damned irrationality. As you intimidated Eddie, she may have 'youngened' me up, I suppose. I wish you had all been there Saturday, but it would definitely have made my week even harder than it was... worrying about embarrassing you."

"Embarrassing us? No," Allie said with everyone concurring.

"I know, I know," Ray said, "But you know what I mean."

"Anyway, sensing the extent of my anger, and thinking she had betrayed the fact of how much she cared for me on national TV, she cowered up in a private room George Steinbrenner let her use for half the game, until she got it together. Well, rather until George came barging in to tell her to *get it together*. He said that no matter what her bumpkin *boyfriend* thought, Ray Bonn was, in fact, largely on his payroll."

Jamie and others in the room interrupted him here. "You were on the Yankees' payroll? I thought the stipulation was that it would be the Mariners'."

"Well, yeah," Ray responded, "but do you imagine that the Mariners management was very keen on being conned out of an at bat that would also cost them at least a million bucks just because George Steinbrenner wanted to have a little fun. Why else would they have bought into such an outlandish contract? He would have to have sweetened the pot considerably don't you think? I figured as much already on Monday night, but arguing that point would have got tedious on national TV. I just wasn't up to it at that point, and that wasn't why I was on the show. I don't actually know what the arrangement was, and I don't want to, but insurance had to be involved – Lloyds of London for all I know, they handle risks. Steinbrenner would have covered it."

"But in any case, George intimidated to Lesa that he was paying through the nose, so that's good. Maybe the Mariners got a draft pick, who knows. That would be even better."

"Anyway, George wanted a show for his money. That was the upshot. I guess Lesa pulled it together for prime time again as only Lesa can and put on a show for him. I really think that she was more exhausted and emotionally distraught than I was afterward. We were both spent ammo on the way home though. That is for sure. I got our driver to take us to a back entry so we could avoid the crowds at the hotel."

"Edna was in our rooms watching TV. She muted it when we got there and spoke with us for a little while. When I went to call home here, Lesa fell asleep on the couch, so I got a spread to cover her when I came back."

"Before leaving, Edna reamed me a new asshole for having been rude to Lesa all week and especially that morning when I went over the top on Lesa's Romeo and Juliet scenario." He laughed thinking about it now. "She had said she wanted to be there to watch me *pirouette*. Goading me, I guess, about striking out." He laughed again with everyone else in the room.

"I acknowledged that my anger at that had been rather excessive, suggesting we do a joint suicide off a Brooklyn bridge. and she proceeded to

inform me of many other major personality flaws as well. I could actually see some them quite clear enough with her searchlight pointing directly at them; I don't know that I remember them all now.

"When she left, I went to my room and fell asleep without undressing."

Helen asked, "What do you accept as one of your flaws then, Honey?"

"Well, Edna included passive aggressive disorder in the list." he laughed. "I guess my angry response to Eddie here tonight has been a little excessive, don't you think? I am sorry by the way, Eddie."

"Don't need to be," Eddie said. "I was way out of line, but I have to say, it's been pretty damned interesting." Everyone laughed in agreement.

"We're used to you, Ray." Helen had a bit of a smile. "But go on."

"Well back to that night after the game, Lesa had gotten up off the couch at some point, I guess, and gone to her bed. My puking my guts out sometime later woke her. She violated my injunction concerning sanctity of my private space, my 'Sanctuary', as she insisted on calling it. As thanks, I guess I puked all over her.

"I was delirious, so this is her story, mind you."

"She took off her reeking night clothes and put on my robe. She got right to work cleaning me up and getting my temperature down. After she had gotten me cleaned up a bit, she called her former roommate from Harvard who is an MD in the Big Apple. Sharon – that's her friend – came over directly. It's just a couple of blocks from where she practices to the Sheltry. They pushed some fluids down me and packed me in towels until I quit shaking and my temperature came down a little."

"Helen called right after they got me stabilized, using woman's intuition, I guess. I was pretty much out of it still." He smiled at her. "But I remember waking up quite a few hours later, dizzy with an awful headache."

Allie asked, "Was Lesa there?" to which Cecil and Stephanie giggled.

Ray looked over at Allie and remembered her having denominated Lesa 'the floozy'. Seeming a little confused, he said, "My door was open. Her doctor friend had told her she should keep an eye on me – probably Sharon's joke, I don't know. She did that. Doctors tend to tell people what they want to hear, don't they, Tom?" Ray chuckled.

"It's not a bad policy. You learn that first and then you learn 'take two aspirins and call me in the morning.' When you have that memorized, they call you a doctor," Dr. Tom allowed, dispensing secrets of the trade.

"And what does he usually say?" Ray asked just for the hell of it.

A few got it, but Tom just looked at him questioningly, so Ray went on.

"So yeah, I guess she kept a pretty close eye on me." He resisted telling them any more details.

"Well, anyway, we got up and got dressed. She did help me a little because I was too weak to do too much by myself. I'm sorry if that's offensive, but I couldn't help it. I was weak, really weak. I fell to sleep at one point while she was scurrying around to find my clean clothes. Then I had two breakfasts that took me a while to eat. I was starved.

"Lesa cleaned up the mess in my bedroom and bathroom so the maid wouldn't know Ray Bonn was human. I recuperated until the honorable Doctor Sharon Astor returned, and then I called Helen.

"That afternoon I got some more information about Lesa's mother's career – she was on the trail of the same irreversibility solution Lesa and I are onto by the way. There was also the final piece to the puzzle concerning Lesa's biological father and confirmation of the affair from which Lesa sprang. I showed Lesa that information, and we scheduled the trip to Boston to meet him. Sharon provided a couple of DNA kits for Lesa and him. After Lesa contacted him, we started packing up to leave. We were both invited to come to their home.

"Whether she had considered me a father figure or not, I considered myself replaced and free to exit. Edna had scheduled me to fly out of Boston..." and here he paused and looked at Helen. "I'm sorry I forgot to call you before leaving as I said I would, but I'm here, and I'm tired."

"It's okay Honey, Lesa did it."

There were smiles and questioning looks throughout the room.

"Women! It's an addiction," Ray sighed. "I'm totally dependent."

"You are," Helen agreed. "You're like the man who was so dependent on his wife that she told her friends that if anything ever happened to her, he would have to re-marry before supper."

"That was *you*, Helen!" Charmaine interjected emphatically. "That was you who made that comment." Everyone laughed.

Ray looked at Helen as she blushed.

They were laughing at him now. Ray felt confused though – the butt of the joke – part of the shooting-himself-in-the-foot syndrome, he guessed, leaving himself open like that. Oh well, it was fine. He was home.

"Last night... a long, long time ago now... Lesa and I went to bed in our own beds in our own rooms for our last night in New York City." Should he tell them about how Lesa had come into his room as he was dressing this morning and laid her warm bare breasts against him making him woozy with wanting to hold her? No, that foot was sore. Oh, God! What was wrong with him, having gone on and on? Blab blab blab.

"Next morning (*this* morning) we got up, packed in a hurry, and said "Hi" and "Bye" to the press as you may have seen on the news. I signed my first baseball, a couple of books, a photo for our favorite limo driver's son, and we flew to Boston with our celebrity glasses that Edna handed us as going away presents. We were met at baggage claim by Fredrik and Cynthia Sorensen; drove to their mansion; walked in their huge yard full of trees, fountains and ponds; had a Thanksgiving dinner of turkey with all the trimmings; and then they took me back to the airport. And yes, Lesa and I kissed goodbye affectionately. It will have to last us a lifetime.

"That's the whole miserable story, Eddie. There just isn't any more than that. Nobody is getting rich writing about the love life of Ray Bonn I'll tell you that much. So, end of story. Don't ever ask me if I'm in love with Lesa

again. Okay? Of course, I'm in love with her. Do I look like an insensitive idiot? I will always be in love with her. I have to live with that. She's one of the good things that's happened in my life.

"You know the whole story now; conclude whatever you like or make up whatever else you want to. I have to get to bed, so Helen and I can hold each other the way a woman and a man who are truly in love are supposed to. I love you all, too... differently. But God dam it, I'm tired. Now 'bye. Get outta here. In addition to my being a curmudgeon, I am really, really tired."

Ray got up and gave Helen and Allie hands to help them up.

"I love you," and "I love you, Daddy," rang from one ear to the other.

Everyone else rose and gathered around in a group hug.

Eddie said, "You're the best dad a guy ever had, and I mean it."

Lisa said, "*This* Lisa loves you now too," to which Eddie took no exception. Everyone was what a woman might call 'sweet', Ray thought. But it was done with, and Ray was glad to have put it to bed. If it was to bed. It had been a memorable homecoming... all in all a horrible experience.

"Whew. Now that was an intense ordeal, huh? How many fathers get to explain their infidelities in front of their entire family and everyone they know like that?" Ray asked Helen as they finally got as far as their bedroom.

"Oh, God," Ray said thinking back on his performance. "I can't believe I told all of that shit, to all of those people. What is wrong with me, Helen? I don't go on like that usually, do I"

"No, you never do. It was refreshing. I needed to know more about the infidelity."

"Refreshing? Are you kidding? That was a disgusting exhibition."

"Yeah," Helen agreed, chuckling at him. "But you got it out of the way, and that was good. And what's more, that is probably more words than our kids may have ever heard you say."

"Helen," Ray pleaded.

"Well, it is. It's time they got to know you."

"To know me? They know me."

"I don't think they have till now, but I think they got a chance to know you a little better tonight... well, this last couple of weeks."

"This last couple of weeks haven't even been me, Helen"

"Yes, it has. It's just you out of your usual rut. And you know what Ray? It was all very exciting to me, even if you *didn't* tell us everything."

"Everything?"

"Yes, everything."

Then after a brief pause, Helen smiled and said, "But if you didn't love Lesa after all that, I don't think I could love you anymore. I'm just glad you don't love her any more than you do. That's about the limit."

Any more than how much, Ray wondered. How much more could a man love anyone.

"Well, being home with you excites me," he said truthfully. They kissed a first long passionate kiss.

"Really, Ray? After having had all those opportunities with that beautiful, vivacious young thing? I wish I could hear your argument for me, Ray."

"Argument for you?"

"Yes. The lengthy irrefutable proof that you love me."

"You have to be kidding, Helen. Anyway, the longer the proof, the less certain it is. The best proofs, the irrefutable ones are the short ones. QED."

"Okay, then it should be quick," she chuckled. At least the chuckle eased Ray's mind.

"Helen, you can't prove axioms. Any mathematical proof begins with basic premises and axioms. Without them you can't prove anything, and they cannot be proven. They are the inalienable truths that are the foundations of all arguments. That's what you are. That's what our relationship is. That's how I know what love is. It wasn't proven to me; I grew up with it."

"You grew up with it?"

"We've been next to each other ever since we were first born. How in the hell could I prove I love you? I wouldn't know where to begin."

"That was pretty good, Ray. I'll give you an A on that."

"It's 'vintage', Helen, contemporaneity, mutual coherence, and... cultural overlap... temporal commonality... whatever you want to call it. They're all part of the premises of love."

"Ray, are you all right? You didn't mention mad cow disease," she added laughing.

"Of course, I'm all right! Don't you get it? Larry King and playmate wife number eight just wouldn't work out... not really. They couldn't possibly understand each other because there would be too small a percentage of their life experiences that they would share in common. Their lives together would be incoherent, largely cognitive dissonance."

"Ray?"

"Yeah?"

"Did you tell Lesa any of this?"

"No, of course not! Anyway, I was just thinking about it before I fell to sleep on the plane."

"But you have more overlap with Lesa in a lot of areas than you do with me, Ray. So, you slept on the plane?"

She unfastened her bra with Ray watching admiringly.

"Yes, they *are* pastel pink, Ray! Maybe peach, I don't know."

"I know. Why else would I love that pastel shade *so* much? It's part of my conditioning. Maybe that's the significant overlap Lesa had going for her." He laughed enthusiastically.

"You saw her's didn't you?"

"Helen! I was nearly in a coma, but yeah, I saw them when she took off her pajama top that I had puked on. So what?"

"I do know that you love me, of course. But you are a piece of work, Ray Bonn, and I do love you too. I always have, and I always will. How could I help it? 'Til death do us part, remember?" She turned, working on his belt kissing him face to face.

"Yeah, I seem to remember something about that."

It was wonderful to be back home again.

#4 The Morning After

Ray felt great. He and Helen had slept late... as late as the phone let them. Light filtering through conifers and the familiar mauve drapes was all part of the undeniability of home. The aroma of Helen, the house, and the vague scent of the surrounding woods defined the Ray Bonn that he knew.

The phone call was from Lesa.

"Hi," she said, when Helen answered.

"Oh, hello, Lesa," Helen responded cheerfully.

Ray thought, "Oh, God," as he pulled his pillow over his head.

"How are you this morning?" Helen continued. "Is it as wonderful as Ray suggested it would be at the Sorensen's mansion?"

"Oh, it *is* wonderful Helen. You'll have to come here to see just how lovely it really is. I have a large section of the house all to myself with an extra bedroom and I can have guests whenever I like." Then after barely a glottal stop, "Did you and Ray sleep well last night? I'll bet it felt good to have him in your bed right next to you again."

"Yes, it did feel good," Helen said, quite amused at how unabashed Lesa could be. "You know how that feels, don't you?" she teased.

"Well, I have slept with Ray, I'm sure you know, but not like you two... not that I wouldn't have wanted to." She teased back by saying what they both knew to be the truth. "Just sleeping together really isn't what *sleeping together* is supposed to be all about though, is it?"

"No, Lesa, I don't suppose it is, and yes, it was wonderful last night."

It seemed to Ray that Helen actually enjoyed teasing with someone in such a frank manner on such an ordinarily sensitive topic with all the playful innuendoes. It was crazy.

"You didn't seem to sap too much of his strength," she added, "so I have to thank you for that, and he seemed to still like this old brown-eyed lady a little."

Ray was thinking, oh, God. Don't do this, Helen. You're not in the same league with Lesa in volleying banter.

"Oh, Helen, there's no surprise about how much he loves you," Lesa said, "and thank you for being so generous and not resenting the little bit of Ray that

I did get to enjoy. I enjoyed being with him so much... when he wasn't mad at me, that is. Would it be all right if I talked to him a little?"

Helen allowed as how it *would* be all right. As she laughed at Ray, she pulled the pillow off his head, to poke the phone in at him.

"You didn't give us much time, did you?" Ray sounded cross.

"Well, I wouldn't know how long it takes you, now would I?" Lesa responded. "How could I know; you wouldn't show me anything *biological*."

Ray's silence told her he resented the comment and intrusion.

"Are you planning on resting up today, or are you going to do it again?" she teased. "There are some of those Mariner chores you have to get done, you know? I assume you're not interested in any of the options for suiting up again, but I have to ask you because they asked me to see if you would sign. I'm still your agent, remember? You want to sign, or should I just file them?"

Ray cheerlessly opted for the latter.

"I'm sending the forms for transferring the funds. Do you handle that aspect or does Helen?" When he indicated that Helen handled all their finances, Lesa said, "Well, when we're done, maybe I should talk to Helen again then."

"Okay, bye," he said unceremoniously.

"Wait!" she screamed into his ear; Helen heard and refused to take the phone. "I wanted to tell you that my dad and I got our swabs into the hospital for analysis already. We get the results back later today."

"Oh, hey, that *is* exciting, Lesa. You'll let us know when you get the results, of course." Oh God, why had he asked for another call.

Helen was trying to get Ray to tell her what was so exciting.

Ray said, "Wait a minute, Lesa," to tell Helen about the tests already being done, and to give her the phone.

Lesa explained to Helen about some of her financial experiences, with some ideas about spreading the large amount of money that they would be receiving. She also gave her some tax tips that no one is ever willing to tell you anymore without first cautioning that you should really consult with your attorney. Helen was impressed at the extent of Lesa's knowledge in the financial arena, knowing that it was in addition to everything else she knew besides.

"Yes, of course," she would like Lesa's help, she insisted again.

"Okay, I'll just send you an e-mail with some attachments. We can communicate that way too, Helen, just like Ray and I will have to on other topics. I'll get back as soon as the results of the DNA analysis are in. Remind Ray that he hasn't answered my e-mail yet. You still in bed?"

"Yes, of course, I'll tell him. Yes, we are still in bed. Do call when you get the DNA information back. Bye, Honey." And Helen hung up.

"Honey?" Ray asked. "What's *that* about? She wanted to know whether we had sex for God's sake."

"Oh, Ray. Of course she wanted confirmation of our having sex. She *knew* we would have sex. She just wants to know what she's missing."

"What she's missing? What she was missing? Helen, didn't I make it clear that she and I did *not* have sex."

"Men! You men don't even know what sex *is*. Clinton gets sperm all over Monica's dress and insists they never had sex. C'mon Ray. I know you two didn't have intercourse, if that's what you're insisting on, but there's more to sex than that."

Ray looked at her totally confused, sputtering truthful but now quite lame-sounding denials. "There was no sperm anywhere!"

She shook her head laughing at him only somewhat tolerantly – definitely not *magnificently* so.

"You act like you wouldn't have cared if we had had intercourse. You were joking with her about it."

"It wouldn't have been a lot different, would it?" she asked.

Ray just laid there staring at her in disbelief. "How in the hell would I know?"

"What *you* call sex is just the contact of two tiny areas of the epidermis of two people. What about all the rest of your bodies, Ray? You've touched each other *everywhere* else! You know you have. You didn't have your pajamas on when you went to bed Saturday night. So she undressed you, and what else."

"I was out of it. I was sick. They were getting me comfortable."

"Yes, I'll bet." She got up shaking her head disgusted with him.

"I couldn't *help* that," he exclaimed. "There weren't any fluid exchanges, or any fluids at *all*, for Christ's sake, Helen! I swear to God! What about that?" Why couldn't Helen see a major difference, Ray wondered. We've had three kids together.

"You swear too much," was her response

"Listen. You're the one who enumerated the constraints of civilization to me way back when, remember? I have never violated those constraints!"

Helen was walking out of the room, laughing at him.

It had seemed as though all the tensions and uncertainties of his trip would have been eliminated now. After all, he was back to being just the guy he had been before all the stuff that seemed to have just coincidentally happened to him in New York had, as a simple matter of fact, *happened*. Wasn't he?

As comfortable as it had been lying with Helen, it wasn't just Helen anymore; there were all these ties to all the stuff that he had lived through in the suite in the Sheltry in the Big Apple that had moved on now to New England. He could still visualize Lesa in her new setting. He wondered whether he should have left directly from New York. He had wanted to make sure that her new situation was stable, of course, but what about his?

He didn't yet realize the extent to which all that *stuff* hadn't just happened as mere contingencies to be quite easily forgotten or just part of a comfortable background. They were now essential aspects of a new joint being, were now permanent integral parts of the working machinery of *him* and would be for the rest of his life. He was realizing now, that he could never be the same person

he had been. The full extent of that was just starting to dawn on him. Bob Dylan had had no idea, because it's never... *all over with* [this particular] *baby blue*. Adam Bonn would have known, but only after it was too late.

Getting back to work in his old environment was not as easy as it should have been either. There were too many interruptions for one thing. Even his kids felt like they had to talk to him on the phone or by e-mail all the time anymore. Keeping fans from coming down the quiet street was a problem.

But it wasn't just the intrusions into his life that had not been there before. For another thing, he could no longer just sit at his desk brainstorming in a sort of solitary meditative state about why this or that aspect of some physical phenomenon was the way it was, which had been the pleasure of his retired existence. There was now someone else, whose approach was virtually identical to his, right in there in his mind beside him, roped to him for the ascent of some intellectual peak or other. That she was no longer literally right beside him didn't matter. She was, as a matter of simple fact, right *there*. She was much quicker and more persistent than he had ever thought of being, more methodical because of her more extensive formal training in this sort of thing. More significantly, she was now continually pre-empting whatever he just happened to have been thinking, with regard to this or that, at the very moment he was thinking it.

An e-mail envelope icon would flash on his screen. He would open it, and there in fully coherent textual format was what he had been groping for, read to him with her impeccable articulation. It was very disconcerting to him. He could no longer put something on the proverbial back burner and wait for a solution to strike him, because it might be placed on a *front* burner by this doppelganger in New England, his alter ego. It might at any moment come boiling up to the surface unannounced.

There was an insistence to the persona at the other end of these communications. That persona was not artificial in any way; it was very real and painfully personal. It was the Lesa he knew and loved so well, so much more than he had explained the evening he had returned, so much more than he would even be capable of explaining. Much more the way Helen probably understood it. Lesa's e-mails were like her very person, vibrant with excitement about whatever they concerned. As he read, it was her alluring voice that read them to him aloud – that read even his own ideas back to him.

The first message that she had sent the night he had left was more or less a hodge podge of information, involving her settling in as an integral member of the Sorensen family. He was very interested in it and wished he could have seen her accommodations, so he could more easily visualize it all. In consequence of stating as much in reply, she had then attached a dozen photos of the place in a next e-mail, one quite intimate one of her that she had set up to take with the time lapse on her digital camera. Ray realized that he actually didn't have any photograph of her, so he carefully stored that photo in a file with an obscure name not to be easily discovered by anyone casually using his

computer. He saved the others in another well-labeled file that he then transferred to Helen on her computer.

But this behavior didn't slacken in any way. Sometime later, after having received another hodgepodge of messages in a single e-mail transmission from Lesa, he read it over several times, deleting it altogether. His response to it was perhaps the essential (former) Ray Bonn. There was the no nonsense response to the informational content and cautions concerning discretion.

Her message had included details of Mariner materials she had received. The funds transfer information was also discussed in case he was interested, and to be sure he would rather Helen took care of all that as Lesa would readily have acknowledged having been told. But it seemed that until he demanded her to leave him off, she wouldn't. The contract options the Mariners would like Ray to consider were there too.

To the former he confirmed her 'supposition' that only Helen needed to be informed of such information as far as he was concerned and that, in fact, he would much prefer *not* being involved, "So don't tell me any more about it."

With regard to the latter, she was also correct. He was *not* interested in pursuing any sort of connection with the Mariners organization. In the future, she could just tell them that without even asking him.

Finally, there was more of what he termed 'love-y-dovey mush'. Ray did not like seeing it in textual format any more than repeated orally.

"I love you," to whatever degree, did *not* seem to Ray like words he would like residing in his in-basket where he liked to leave his messages that had content he might like to refer back to at some point or on his hard drive. He referred to that section of her message in a completely separate reply that he then sent under the subject heading of "Personal Matters" as follows:

Dear Lesa,

I do love you. I admitted that to all my family and friends who welcomed me home that first night. Eddie asked me if I loved you, complete with insinuations, and so I said, 'I do!' I told everyone here the entire story of our relationship just because I do not want any secrets that they might someday think of as being 'dirty' little secrets. There is absolutely nothing dirty about any of our relationship as far as I am concerned. I don't know why you love me so much and I don't know why I love you so much. And I don't know how I can love two women as much as I do. But I do. I just do. These seem to be odd facts that are hanging out there going nowhere. These are 'observations,' I guess, that, as you have forced me to acknowledge, I do have to accept as more real than any arguments to make them go away. I do understand that.

But the important thing is that they are going nowhere. Our romantic involvement can go nowhere. There is nowhere for it to go. We must leave it hanging there as sad as either of us may find that. Please do not say, 'I love you,' or any similar things in e-mails to me that I could not let Helen or anyone else read. And if you ever feel like you absolutely must express some such

concept, please place it in a separate e-mail from anything referring to our scientific collaboration or business matters. That is really important to me.

So, Yes, I do love you. I always will. I could not possibly stop loving you. But what one might ordinarily consider logical follow-on activities when people fall in love are over for us in every respect. I am committed to Helen 'until death do us part' and beyond. I will never go back on that promise or in any way marginalize what she and I have committed to. You and I have these fond memories of a week in New York City and a few hours in Boston that we can carry with us however we each choose to do it. But please, please let us leave it there.

As hard as it is for me to envision you happily married to some bright young gentleman, it is what you must find for yourself. Know that I will wish the very best in support of your conclusion as to whomever you consider right for you. I know that you will not be content without children on whom to lavish your so wonderfully unselfish love. It would be a travesty for you not to have children who would ennoble the future of the human race. I hope someday to still be alive to hold one of your babies in my arms and see your brilliance beaming forth in a new generation.

Now, let's get to work on that book of ours.

Ray

When Cynthia knocked and looked in at Lesa after lunch, she saw a disconsolate Lesa, looking down at her computer screen dejectedly. "Are you all right, Lesa?"

"No," was all she said.

"Is there anything I can do?" Cynthia asked.

"No."

"Should I come back later?"

"No," and after a pause, "Please stay with me a little while."

"Okay. Would you like to talk about it?"

"Yes." But nothing came and so Cynthia walked over by Lesa and put a hand on her shoulder and noticed that she was sobbing. Then Lesa turned her teary face toward her and said, "Here. Read this." So Cynthia read Ray's message and tears came to her eyes as well. The two women held each other tightly in silence.

Eventually Fredrik was at the door and knocked. He saw the despondency of the two and walked over to them to say, "Lesa, we just got good news. The hospital has called to confirm that I'm your father."

Lesa extended her arm to include him. She kissed him tearfully.

"But what's wrong, ladies?" Fredrik queried.

Cynthia pointed to the screen. Lesa nodded when Fredrik asked whether he should read what was displayed.

He read the message and then re-read it solemnly. Finally, he said, "He is a gentleman. Lesa, why don't we have a family conversation about this?"

Lesa looked at him with a kind of dumb stare.

Fredrik spoke again, "Can you formulate exactly how you saw this relationship working out if everything were to go exactly as you would have liked it to, Lesa? Ray evidently told his family all the details of your relationship. Maybe you should tell your family, now that you know we're family, some more of the details including where you saw this going, so we can be there for you as a family should be. Just how intimate have you two been?"

So Lesa reiterated her version of the same story Ray had told his family with much more detail than she had told them the night before, and much more dramatically than Ray had told it, the same in all its essential details, but without the omissions.

"So how did you see it working out?" Fredrik asked.

"Not like *this*," Lesa said.

"No, but how then? Do you want Ray to leave Helen for you?"

"No. They love each other too much for that. Can't you tell?"

"Then what?"

"Helen and I could get along. I like her." She paused. "And she likes me."

"I'm sure she does," Cynthia said. "No one could help loving you, Lesa, and I overheard your conversation with her. But women are quite possessive of their husbands. Sometimes even if they don't love them, which she clearly does. Why do you think she would welcome sharing the man she's been married to for thirty years?"

"She would."

"But would either you or she be willing for you to be 'the other woman' in such a high-profile celebrity situation? The press would be unbearable for all of you." It was Fredrik's gentle realism.

Lesa looked at him with deep admiration, whether she would accept his conclusions or not, she liked his thinking. He was her father and that, in itself, was an immense satisfaction. But even that she saw as another reason to prove her love for Ray was certainly not father image thing.

Sensing her trust, Fredrik felt a deep connection to her as well. Being her father filled him with extreme pride. He blurted out, "Oh, Lesa, I am so proud to be your father."

"You can't imagine how happy I am to know I'm your daughter. Where would I be without you two right now? Ed would not understand."

Cynthia stayed on topic. "Do you want children, Lesa?"

Lesa looked from one of them to the other thinking about their questions. "Oh, yes," she said. "I want *Ray's* children."

"How do you see that working?" Fredrik asked.

She looked at him as though it were a sex education question. "I know how it works," she said, and they all laughed... Lesa through her tears. "You know the day before yesterday after Ray and I got up and he was recuperating in the living room and Edna and Sharon came in?"

"Yes?" they both responded.

"Well, Sharon asked me what was going on between me and 'my married friend, Ray.'" Lesa looked at both Fredrik and Cynthia with a shrug to suggest how straightforward Sharon could be. "I remember exactly what I said because it mattered so much to me. It was an epiphany that I felt very deeply. I still feel it. I said, 'I love Ray to the end of the universe and back. If it's infinite as Ray supposes, then that's how much.' Then Sharon looked at me as if that weren't enough of an explanation for me loving a married man. So I said, 'Ray loves me that much too, only maybe a little bit more,' she paused looking at each of her new parents bashfully, "because I have pastel pink nipples," and all of us were laughing, even Ray."

The Sorensens laughed now too, but looked at each other askance. So Lesa inserted the fact that Ray had told her he loved that shade of "pastel pink" when he had seen her breasts yesterday morning after he recovered from his illness. That hardly seemed sufficient explanation, but she went on.

"So I added, 'And Ray is married to Helen, whom he met on the day the universe was born. I'm guessing that they love each other until the end of that universe, and he loves his kids who have a rather distorted view of the siren in the next universe.' Then I looked over at Ray and we smiled at each other. He actually enjoyed me going on like that, I think. He didn't scoff or say, 'Oh, God,' like he does. So I said, 'These two parallel universes are just floating out there, and there has to be a bridge constructed between them so Ray can commute.' It was so real, and it seemed so easy. It was like a sacred commitment."

"What did Ray say about that project, Lesa?" Cynthia asked.

"Let's see." She thought for a moment, then continued, "He asked whether our collaboration on discovering the thermodynamic laws of the universe would have anything to do with it?"

"And did you answer him?" Fredrik asked.

"Yes. I said, 'I think so, but I have to get with Helen. It's a woman thing.'" Cynthia and Fredrik looked at each other and chuckled.

"And then I thanked him for not saying 'Oh, God,' the way he had back when we first met... whenever he felt trapped... by me."

"You've spoken with Helen," Cynthia stated for Fredrik's benefit.

"Yes. Helen isn't prudish."

"Is Ray?" Fredrik asked.

Lesa smiled. "Yes, he is. Very."

"Lesa, tell me a little about this 'collaboration' arrangement that you and Ray are committed to."

"Sure. What do you want to know about it?"

"Wasn't there some disagreement in that regard?" Fredrik asked.

"There shouldn't have been. The important part is all Ray's."

"Does Ray agree with that?" Fredrik pursued and watched as Lesa's expression revealed some measure of insight.

"Do you think I should have let Ray have his way as far as me being equal in our collaboration?" she asked.

"Isn't that what he said he wanted on the Larry King Live show?" Cynthia asked, sensing where Fredrik was going with this. "Men like to be magnanimous with the women they love, you know." She smiled at Fredrik whose expression in response confirmed her proposition.

"Oh," Lesa said. "Our collaboration does have something to do with the bridge then, doesn't it? I should have been more sensitive to what Ray wanted to keep him more intimately involved, shouldn't I?"

"Maybe." Fredrik said thoughtfully. "But this is no trivial thing you know, Lesa. It may be a 'woman thing' as you say, but it's apparently *for* a man; he'd be the one tramping back and forth. So it better be pretty male-friendly don't you think?" he asked, laughing.

"Yes," she said, "I will co-author the book if he still wants me to." She paused and then added, "I love having a family to talk to about problems. You guys are great."

"Well, don't forget to at least think about what he suggested in the letter. He is very much older than you, you know. He's my age, or thereabouts. He could still be in your life, even if you had a different man who was your husband." Fredrik put his hand to her mouth, since she was preparing to remonstrate. "If it would be right for him to have two leading ladies, maybe he's saying it would be all right for you to have two leading gentlemen."

When he removed his hand from her lips she said: "Of course it would be alright if I were in love with two men that way, like he is with two women, but I'm not. And I won't be. Never."

"Well, so much for that then," Cynthia said. "It looks to me like you'd better make sure the collaboration is exactly the way he wants it, and that'll give you some time to work on constructing this bridge."

"I agree. I think that's the best plan for now, Lesa, don't you?" Fredrik asked.

"Yes, I do. I'll fix that; it was terribly stubborn of me. I have to call to tell them about our good news, too. I'll feel Helen out about how Ray feels about our collaboration. She's easy for me to talk to."

Later Lesa called Ray and Helen. Helen answered as usual, unless she was out shopping or with her friends. Lesa said, "Hi, Helen. I have to talk to Ray, but would you please just answer yes or no about something first?"

"Sure, anything. What is it, Lesa?"

"Well... do you think Ray would like it if I were to co-author that book?"

"Yes, definitely and it matters a lot."

"Thank you, Helen. You don't think he's just being magnanimous?"

"Definitely not."

"Thanks. Could I talk to him now then to work this out, and then could I talk to you again afterward?"

Helen allowed that she'd get back on after Lesa had finished with Ray. Helen handed the phone to him.

"Hi, Lesa," he said, very self-conscious about the e-mail he had sent earlier, and wondering what all the "yes and no, definitely" responses had been about. But Lesa seemed cheery and upbeat, so he relaxed a little.

"He's my dad, Ray. He *is* my dad. Thank you Ray, I love you."

"That's great, Lesa. I'm thrilled for you both... all three of you. But we knew that, didn't we?"

"Yes, we did know it, Ray, because you figured it out." She paused long enough for it to be awkward. Ray was pretty sure she would say something about his personal e-mail, but she asked instead about the collaboration.

"Ray, would you please explain to me exactly what *you* would like on this collaboration of ours? I've been so stubborn that I've probably never really heard your side of it."

"You know what I want," Ray answered succinctly.

"But exactly why, Ray. Could you please explain it to me one more time? If you already have, please do it again."

"Okay. Listen to all my points before you interrupt me, okay?"

"Yes, of course."

"Number one is that you have written more pertinent material on the subject that should be in the book than I have. I haven't even addressed the main thermodynamic issues. Two: Your treatment of Gibb's differential equations is excellent, and I know you are onto the approach of connecting them more directly to the mediated collision process than I ever envisioned or could ever have accomplished. That should be in our book. Three: What you give me credit for is not completely done yet; we have to complete it together. Four: You would have done that on your own, without me before very long. Five: Without you the book would have no credibility. With you as co-author it will be seriously considered by the people in the thermodynamics community who matter. Six: If you were a full collaborator we could win the Nobel Prize. And then I would be the winner you tried so hard to make me by swinging a bat. Okay, those are my points."

"Oh, Ray. I am so sorry for not letting you lead. Can I *please* be co-author with you, and we'll write the Foreword together too, okay?"

"Certainly! Thank you Lesa, you've made my day. Let me be the one to tell Edna, would you? Can Ruth Henderson be your agent too? She is a very nice lady. We may not actually need her services a lot, except that she certainly helped me write to be understood by the general public. It seems to me that nice people like Ruth deserve a slice of the pie, don't you?"

"Oh yes, Ray. I definitely agree."

"Lesa, about that e-mail today... you're being just grand."

"You too, Ray. Can I talk to Helen now, before I start blubbering into the phone how much I love you again."

"Sure. You know how I feel about you too. Here's Helen." He handed the phone to Helen and she walked away into the other room chatting with Lesa about their day. When Helen finally got off the phone she came back into

their office and said, "I guess Lesa came around to the full collaboration that you thought was necessary for the success of your book. I wonder why."

"Yeah. Me too. It must have been her father," he said and continued looking at the papers Lesa had given him earlier. He looked up after a fairly long interval to say, "Oh, did she tell you that he definitely is her father?"

"No, but I guessed that," Helen said, wondering what all had been going on in Ray's head during the long interval.

Later Ray was happy to notice that he had received Margaret Landau's paper via snail mail from the University library. It was the one presented at the Conference on Irreversibility in Mexico. The paper's title, *Issues in Irreversibility* was particularly interesting. The fact that it had been given the best paper award for the conference had suggested it might contain material to contribute to their findings. The auxiliary fact that Lesa had been conceived at about the moment that her mother was presenting the paper carried its own interest for Ray, as he knew it would for Lesa. Of course, with Lesa's networking abilities, she might have already received a copy. Ray's copy of the paper had arrived in the mail the second day after he had returned home.

The paper was indeed brilliant even if not as polished as it might have been had there been a more professional peer review. There were several key points that she had brought up that, if anyone had pursued them, might have gotten them where Ray and Lesa were now, but much sooner. It was extremely insightful. She had noted that elastic collisions of particles would never produce the required irreversibility. She even suggested the possibility of the source being mediated photon interactions, stopping short of insight into how that would result. Clearly, if she had not gotten caught up in childcare, left academia, and been murdered, she, or more likely Lesa, would have had all the right material laid out on the dining room table, where Lesa would quickly have connected all the dots, probably even in her teens, he could imagine.

Margaret was aware of William James Sidis's work on irreversibility and quoted statements from his work. Ray wondered to what extent she might have worried about problems that he had had with an accelerated educational program put together by over-eager parents. Probably insistence on the acceleration process had been the product of Peter's vanity, with Margaret making every attempt to ameliorate the process so that it would be as easy and enjoyable as she could make for her love child.

Within the week Ray was back in the saddle in his office with the division of labor back to where all he had to worry about was the inner workings of one universe and intermittent exchanges with the other. The aspect of this reduced scope that concerned Ray right now were the details of the mitigated collisions of microscopic particles and in what way the mitigation circumvents their being simply *elastic*. Joining him in this endeavor now was the inimitable Lesa Landau, who hoped soon to be legally Lesa Sorensen.

Ray had intellectually devoured her thesis, the articles she had published in a couple of journals and others that were just working papers like most of

his own. She had clearly been on the right path. It was altogether fitting that he and she be equal co-authors in this endeavor. This way they could use her material freely, and they would be uninhibited in merging their ideas. He wasn't sure to what extent that would have been a problem though.

Their e-mails became increasingly lengthy and obtuse as they worked to exchange drafts that would ultimately be chapters in the *Origins of Irreversibility*. Within days of having returned home, Ray had already transmitted the following:

SUBJECT: *A Draft of an Introduction to Our Origins Book*

Lesa:

Attached please find a pass at somewhat of an introduction to our work. Clearly, I have lifted sections quite directly from the draft of which you have both the only printed as well as an electronic copy as well as portions of your thesis. Please modify or replace this file however you see fit and we'll keep the result as File 1, An Intro in our joint working folder for the book.

*Thanks.
Ray*

ATTACHMENT: *CHAPTER 1*

[The interested reader with some background in the physical sciences might like to read *The Nature, Origin, and Profound Implications of Irreversibility* available in print. The title and chapter one have in the meantime been considerably modified from what Ray first sent to Lesa.]

Although the attachment was fairly lengthy and Lesa had many other things on her mind, she had gotten on it right away. She saw many problems with what Ray had put together as a first draft of their introduction that would determine whether any layman would ever buy the book after glancing at those first few pages. Although all of what Ray had included made all kinds of sense to Lesa as the first sections of Ray's unpublished book had, she was a soul mate who tended to think the same way and process information the very same as Ray. Besides which, they now had a considerable amount of shared scientific background on the topic. An average reader, if indeed an *average* layman had any business with such a book in the first place, would languish in the subtle arguments using terms of which they might never have even heard.

Her first impression was that they were not going to be very successful pretending that this book belonged in every home in America right next to the family *Bible* and *Aberrations of Relativity*. Their bestseller market share would be small indeed. Edna would take exception. Neither of them, nor certainly Larry King, could ever figure out why any Joe Blow Americana would have wanted to read Ray's first book; and maybe, like the family *Bible*, nobody else ever had, but Edna addressed such challenges eagerly.

But this was going to be a tougher sell, even if they left out virtually all of the equations, which she didn't think was even remotely possible. All Lesa could think to do for this was to water down the book considerably, if in fact, it made any sense at all to have a comprehensible watered-down version of thermodynamics – well, not thermodynamics really, more the underpinnings of thermodynamics from the statistical mechanics perspective. They would have to use technical journals and various thermodynamics, statistical mechanics, and general physical topics conferences and proceedings as the venues in which to fully explain their ideas. This would be the approach they ended up taking, although at this point Ray still argued in favor of the capabilities of Joe Blow with whom he associated very closely.

Lesa suggested that their book should perhaps begin with a glossary of the definitions of the terms with which he had already saturated the introduction. Broad conceptual colloquialisms such as 'the arrow of time' had to be understood by the reader in terms of technical definitions of 'reversibility' and 'irreversibility'. Otherwise none of what they had to say would be of any interest to such an audience, let alone enable what they had to say to make any sense to its proper audience.

He had relied heavily on philosophical and methodological terms such as 'reductionism', 'epistemic', 'emergent', etc. The ordinary reader would have to have had at least a refresher on what was involved with each of these terms, she thought. Although Ray described them in his text, cameo presentations needed to be available in a glossary. The traditional thermodynamic terms and parameters also needed to be more succinctly defined before they were used with quite such easy familiarity. Lesa would need to commiserate with Ruth Henderson as Ray had suggested.

Ruth's editing was invaluable. It was very important that the fog index be considerably reduced. Although Ray might be able to comprehend such sentences, just as she was able to read them with ready recognition, for ordinary readers the mere juxtaposition of so many multisyllabic terms within a single sentence would render the text virtually undecipherable. They must shorten the sentences wherever possible. If there were several shorter words to replace his "sesquipedalianisms", then they should take that alternative.

"Sesquipedalianisms?" Lesa, why are you using such big words?" he had responded.

"Then you get the idea," she replied. "Ruth said you would. We have to write for the sophomore in high school here, or at most, freshman in college. You have some interesting figures in your draft that I think we ought to keep in the book and maybe include a few more. Maybe your doppelganger will draw us some pictures to put in there."

His resistance had only been the way he teased. He agreed with her completely. He suggested that maybe Ruth should be given an even larger editorial role.

Lesa agreed readily to that, and so Ruth Henderson became an integral part the mix. Lesa enjoyed having Ruth involved and Ruth was overjoyed to be

used in this way. She remained her very unobtrusive self but was extremely helpful throughout the publication process even as demands for her services had increased considerably due to Ray's high praise on Larry King Live.

Ray told Lesa about having received the Proceedings from the conference at which her mother had received the best paper award. The paper was brilliant. Had she obtained a copy yet? He could scan it in and send it to her, if she hadn't.

Ray was enthusiastic, "Lesa, your mother brought up the points that, I think, should have been generally accepted as the seminal issues of the time. This included recognition that analyses of the microscopic collisions from which Boltzmann and his intellectual descendants had derived his distribution of energies using conservation laws needed to be revised. This revision had to include the energy and momentum of the intermediate photons by which the collisions were now known by everyone to be mediated. Our recognition that relativistic Doppler and the photo-electric effect both impose constraints on the process was anticipated. That is, in fact, where entropy entered the picture.

"She had pointed out that although such a revision was generally known to be required, it had not yet been properly retrofitted into the analyses. She had suggested that when such a program was actually carried out, that there might well be surprises in the electromagnetic exchange process precipitated by relative motion of interacting particles, and that process might very well be irreversible, exactly as we have found. It has struck me, Lesa, that your mother might well have laid information on your dining room table that would have predated my first intuitions by more than a decade, had she lived. I would like it if we could highlight this bit of genius on her part in our book, perhaps in our Foreword and special acknowledgement."

Lesa had not yet even ordered the Proceedings, but since the Harvard Physics Library would have them, she would peruse the Proceedings there, but if he wouldn't mind scanning and attaching the files of her mother's paper, she would certainly appreciate it. She would like to show her father as well. She was indeed thrilled that he had thought of highlighting the paper in their book. "But identifying the constraints of photon mediation were your idea, Ray. I might have gotten there, but I wasn't there yet."

#5 Adoption and Estrangement

Lesa had quickly investigated the process of adult adoption current in her State to rid herself of the taint of Peter Landau. She loved her biological father Fredrik Sorensen and his wife Cynthia. Since they had consented gladly to being her adoptive parents, she wanted to get that process underway and completed as soon as possible, so that her accumulating career achievements would be in the name by which she longed to become known.

What she found out was that the adoption process must begin from the person seeking to adopt an adult, not the other way around, and that it was usually for inheritance purposes. In particular:

1. Any person desiring to adopt an adult as an heir needs to file a petition in the Juvenile Court of the county of the person's residence who wishes to be so adopted. Since she had so recently resided in dormitories at Harvard, that would be straightforward.
2. A summons must be issued in accordance with civil procedure and be served on the person sought for adoption. She was ready for it.
3. The person to be adopted must file a written response to the petition in consent of the adoption. She would.
4. Upon filing the consent of the person to be adopted, the petition will be granted. Wow!
5. The final decree of this adoption is sufficient to change the name of the adopted person. The birth certificate need not be changed. (Lesa, of course, would proceed further to effect that change as well, although she knew that that would take a little more time.)

Contact information was readily available on various websites from which one could receive the proper petition forms, etc.

After Lesa had all the appropriate information lined up and printed out, she decided to get Fredrik and Cynthia involved. Bringing it up again was a little awkward for her because the ostensible rationale for adult adoption seemed usually, at least, to be establishing an alternative legal heir. That was not what Lesa wanted. She wanted them to know that, and to thus exclude that in another Last Will and Testament document, which process she also investigated and had printed out the appropriate forms so as to make it a minimum impact on Fredrik and Cynthia. Lesa was probably even more

wealthy than the Sorensens, in any case, and neither needed, nor wanted any further inheritance.

Fredrik was working very hard on his troupe's next performance, which would occur shortly, but Cynthia was at home regularly. Lesa could hear her playing the piano in the sitting room, so she walked into the sitting room to talk with her when she had completed playing a piece. Cynthia's playing was magnificent and Lesa sat back in the chair Ray had sat in that first morning they had arrived, when Ray had requested that Cynthia play, *I Needed You*, and Lesa had sung from the depths of her heart. Cynthia finished the piece she had been playing and stopped to look at Lesa who seemed a bit dreamy.

"You thinking about Ray?" Cynthia asked.

"Yes, I was thinking about how you played his request. I sang like a real show off and then climbed into his lap here."

"It was beautiful, Lesa." Cynthia began playing the song again and singing the words softly until Lesa picked up the refrain and began again to sing. When a verse of the song was completed Cynthia sat on the piano bench watching Lesa. "You must have wanted to talk. What is it?"

"Oh, I've found out how the adult adoption procedures work, but it's usually done to establish a legal heir, and I don't need... I mean I don't *want*, an inheritance from you. I know you must have thoughtfully figured out where you would want that to go, and quite honestly, Cynthia, I have more money than I enjoy keeping track of to say nothing of the additional millions Ray insisted I take as commission."

"Well, Fredrik and I talked about that, and we are changing our will anyway to establish you as our only heir. If I should ever have a baby, which I would certainly hope I would have some day, although we've become a little discouraged about that." She gave a wan smile. "Then, of course, you would share equally. We are not poor either, Lesa."

"Oh, I can tell that," Lesa said. "I hope there isn't any medical reason why you and my dad can't have a baby though."

"There doesn't seem to be. We know he's had one child, and that has been very reassuring to us both." She laughed. "But Fredrik is getting older you know." Lesa looked concerned. "What is it, Lesa? Why do you look so concerned? He isn't *that* old, and we are happy in any case."

"Oh, I know," Lesa said. "I was just thinking about Ray and me. You think Ray could father a baby for me, don't you?"

Cynthia smiled. "You don't take no for an answer, do you?"

"Someday I'm going to have Ray's baby, Cynthia. I *really* am!"

"How're you going to do that, Lesa? He doesn't seem to be a major sperm donor." Cynthia chuckled, thinking it a clever witticism.

"Oh, Cynthia," she sighed. "He loves me."

Cynthia looked at her and wondered just what went on in that fabulous processor inside her skull. Those wheels were always turning, she knew. "I'm sorry. I just couldn't resist."

"But... that's another problem," Lesa said cheerily, "Right now I just wanted to know whether you had any apprehensions about adopting this little orphan girl."

"None whatsoever, Lesa. You are *not* an orphan. Having you be called Lesa Sorensen rather than after the name of that awful man that both you and Fredrik hate, and for good reason, would give both Fredrik and I extreme pleasure. You have to know that."

"I do," she smiled happily. "Well, I've printed out the forms for you and my dad to look at and maybe we can file them later this afternoon or tomorrow then."

"Sure. I was going to ask you whether you'd like to ride with me into town and have lunch with your father. There's a little shopping I really need to get done. Do you need anything?"

"Hmm. You know Cynthia, I really ought to get back to ASI for a day to wrap things up for this sabbatical or whatever it is. You said I could stay on with you as long as I liked, didn't you?"

"We certainly did, and we would really love it if you moved in to stay. I can imagine it would be a good place to get some writing done. And it's pretty handy to your old school. You have to have many useful contacts there."

"That's my plan then, Cynthia! But I'm not ready to go down there just yet to extend my sabbatical, get my clothes, and terminate my lease. I bought a few clothes to get by when I went shopping with Edna, but she isn't a good shopper. She doesn't enjoy it. Would you mind going with me to get some comfortable clothes."

"I would love to." Cynthia was exuberant.

They lunched with Fredrik after meeting the dancers, with Fredrik showing off his celebrity daughter to them all. Afterward Cynthia took Lesa to all her favorite stores, where Lesa purchased clothes to fill her closets at the Sorensen mansion.

That evening Lesa sat down with Fredrik and Cynthia to fill out all the adoption forms. Thus, in less than a week, Lesa Landau had completed the steps to become Lesa Sorensen and began retrofitting her new name back into her previous life.

She had to tell Ray first. She called and, of course, Helen answered. "Hi Helen. I have something extremely important to tell Ray," Lesa spurted out excitedly.

"You're not pregnant?" Helen only half teased.

"Oh, Helen!" Lesa was startled – particularly since she had been telling Cynthia she would, in fact, one day be pregnant with Ray's baby. She recovered enough to say, "You know that damned prude of a husband of yours better than that." She found that she was actually angry with Helen.

"Yes, I'm sorry for that comment. It just seems like whenever a woman has something to tell a man with so much enthusiasm and secrecy that it must be a baby on the way."

"Oh, okay," Lesa said, "but I wouldn't know about that. "There're no secrets. My adoption papers are all essentially completed. Fredrik and Cynthia Sorensen have a new daughter and there's a different name to put on the book."

"Oh, Lesa. I am so happy for you." And then, "You must all be so happy."

"We are. I was," she said. "Now if only I was pregnant with Ray's baby, I'd be *really* happy." She had thought about Helen's opening response. The more she thought about it, the more irritated she became.

"I said I was sorry, Lesa. I am."

"I know, but I'm *not*. I want Ray's baby, Helen. I'd even like to carry his clone around inside me for nine months. I'd raise it with more love than any baby ever had... all the love it deserves."

"That sounds irrational, Lesa, illegal even," Helen said becoming a bit snippy but chuckling at the same time.

"The truth is irrational now? You brought this whole thing up, Helen, not me!" Lesa didn't think she had ever been so angry with anyone before. She was hurt. She knew this was being compounded by frustrations of her own, but she would have been mad about this if nothing else were going on in the whole world. It wasn't just Helen's taunting that was the immediate cause of it, it was also Ray's having distanced himself.

"Well, the *truth* is that he is *my* husband, Lesa," Helen responded, "Usually women brag about being impregnated by men they are actually married to."

"So, when was your Alice born? Nine months and one day after you and Ray were married? I don't think so, Helen! The *truth* is that you didn't wait to get pregnant until you had you a husband or even a high school diploma. You hooked your athlete boyfriend and kept him from getting the education he deserved. That's what you did. Now, can we just let this pregnancy thing go?"

"Did Ray tell you that?" Helen asked defensively, tearful but furious now.

"No! I figured it out on my own. It's pretty damned obvious don't you think? It's a matter of record."

Helen had tears running down her cheeks now as she said, "Lesa, I truly am sorry. I was just having fun. I wasn't trying to be mean. At least I don't think I was trying to be mean, Lesa. You are my friend and I enjoy our conversations."

"Well, don't tell Ray any of this then, please. He doesn't want to ever see me again anyway, and we have a Nobel Prize to win. Don't keep him from that too. If he heard about any of this conversation, he wouldn't even communicate with me by e-mail anymore, because you're all that really matters to him. You have all that power over him, evidently you always have. Use it carefully." She had just unleashed the full extent of her furor and she was becoming shocked at her own destructive audacity.

There was a long silence. Finally, she said, "Well, anyway... I'm adopted. I thought somebody there might like to know. I love you, Helen. Bye."

She hung up and didn't answer when Helen dialed right back, or when Helen dialed after waiting a minute or so.

Ray yelled from the other room, "Nuisance caller?"

When Helen walked in to where he sat at his keyboard, her arm dangling with her cell phone in it, Ray noticed that she had tears in her eyes.

"It was Lesa," she said. "The adoption papers are final."

"Oh, that's great. So what's the problem?"

"I made her mad."

"You made her mad? Nobody makes Lesa mad," Ray laughed. "She doesn't get mad, she gets even." He thought it was cute. Clearly Helen didn't.

"I did, Ray, and she got even."

"Well, call her back."

"I did. She won't answer my calls now. Will you please call her and tell her how truly sorry I am."

"Okay. What'd you say?"

"Never mind that, Ray. Please just call her. She'll know."

So Ray called but Lesa would not pick up the phone, not that day, or the next day, or the next. In fact, it was months before she would answer a phone call from either of them, although when she had information that was time-critical for them with regard to Ray's contracts or financial information that Helen might need to know, she would call. Their business would be conducted professionally; she would act as though nothing had ever happened, then quickly hang up.

Ray assumed that it had something to do with the e-mail he had sent distancing himself from his and Lesa's romantic association. And, of course in some indirect way, it probably did. Ray was not going to reopen Pandora's box by getting into that mix up.

There was heaviness in Helen's heart for what had transpired between them, because Lesa had so quickly become a most valued friend. Lesa's comment about how Helen's teen pregnancy had thwarted the dreams of the one she had loved her entire life, ever since they had suckled on the same breasts, tore at her heart. Lesa and she had shared almost everything, even though it had only been for a short while. Helen could ask her anything, always getting a straight answer, even about Ray. She desperately missed that relationship for which she had had such high hopes. When it seemed finally to have been re-established too many months later, Helen was extremely relieved, but still full of regrets. Too late she realized that although Lesa was very straightforward in her relationships, she was also very sensitive about personal matters and could be vicious, if she perceived herself under attack.

Helen didn't admit to Ray all of the conversation that had transpired between them. Although, when Lesa would not answer her phone calls or even Ray's when she had finally convinced him to try on his cell phone so Lesa would know that it was he and not Helen, she knew that she must tell Ray some part of what it had been about.

She was not afraid of what Ray would say to her, she was afraid of what he might do to his relationship with Lesa. It was just as Lesa had said, Helen knew he would support whatever she wanted. But Helen wanted this to work out for Ray, and Lesa too, not just because of the peevishly threatened loss of a treasured prize, but because she loved them both and knew they loved each other in a most productive way, as well as loving her. The many things that were now happening in Ray's life largely because of Lesa were, in fact, excellent developments for Helen as well as Ray.

She told him the crux of the spat without mentioning Lesa's cruel comments about Helen's pregnancy keeping him from the education he had needed for realizing his dreams at a realistic age. Her own sensitivity to that issue was something that Helen had felt from the first suspicion that she might have been pregnant. It seemed to her that there was an awareness that seemed to have bubbled up with her anger in response to Lesa's eagerness, an aspect that had lain in the background of their marriage. Helen was not ready to address it.

Ray hadn't commented but refused to make further exploratory calls to Lesa after Helen explained the situation. It seemed totally out of his domain of responsibility. But it was now such that neither Helen nor Ray felt like making any extraordinary attempt to tell Lesa that Ray was showing up at SAFECO Field on a Sunday to throw out the first pitch and pick up his trophies.

#6 A Summer of Discontent

This obligation of going to Mariners headquarters to get the seven grand balls he had slammed in New York was something Ray felt he had to get out of the way, because even if he didn't call, he would worry about having to do it. He had asked Helen if she would help him get that done by calling about it and going in with him as soon as possible. He'd have asked her to go in and get them without him, but he knew that wouldn't fly with either Helen or Mariners management.

The weekend in New York had indeed been a great Yankee-Mariner series... well, at least from the Mariners' perspective. After the amazing game on Saturday, the Yankees had only one pitcher who had not seen some duty and mistreatment at the hands of Ray Bonn or others in the Mariners lineup. That lone rested pitcher had started the game on Sunday and given up runs in each of the first five innings without relief. The relievers who did finally attempt to rescue him did little better, so that although the final score showed a ten-zip shutout, it was much worse than that since the Mariners had left many runners stranded, a problem that had plagued them in recent years. Meanwhile Felix Molina pitched an outstanding game for the Mariners, going the full nine innings with less than a hundred total pitches thrown. Thus, on the Monday following, when play resumed for the Mariners against the Yankees one more time in the four-game series, they had a bullpen that was no wearier and drearier than usual, and morale that soared. They had taken the game on Tuesday as well. Then through three or four cities, and back home to Seattle to face Yankees again. Without a day off, the Yankee hurlers still reeled.

As far as the standings went, the Yankees as usual had a roster of stars to propel them. But now in the lead in the American League Eastern Division were the Boston Red Sox who had been fighting for it throughout the first month of the season. The Red Sox were a couple in front of Toronto and the Yankees were considerably (for that time of year) further back, fighting Tampa Bay for the cellar.

Clearly the Saturday game had emptied the sails of the Yankee Clipper. With no days off for an extended period, by the time they would recover it would be an uphill battle trying to catch the Red Sox the rest of the way. Boston soon came into the Big Apple and swept a three-game series. The Sox maintained their considerable lead through the All-Star break and by mid-

September they would clinch the division during a home stand against the Yankees to take the East.

George Steinbrenner had vowed to Lesa that the Yankees would not lose the pennant race on account of her client having beaten them in a single game before their home fans. Of course, "the pennant" has come to mean the American League Championship. There is more to losing a pennant than a single game was the gist of George's statement, and even losing the division was not losing the pennant. The playoffs would be a new season and finishing second in the East often guaranteed that team the American League's Wild Card slot in the playoffs.

The Mariners on the other hand had become perennial cellar dwellers in the West, since their phenomenal record-setting season in which they failed to win the American League pennant and so had gotten no shot at the World Series that year. Momentum in sports being what it is, that deflationary collapse seemed enough to undo the Mariners for a decade, if not more. So once again they were securely in the cellar very soon after having won their first two of the year. That had been the situation that Saturday and for some time thereafter. They would gradually reduce the number of games they were below 500 and be more than ten games above that mark by the all-star break. They took one series after another until by late Summer the Angels and Mariners would be in a bitter struggle for supremacy in the West.

But we have gotten way ahead of ourselves. At this juncture, the Mariners just wanted to present the balls to Ray Bonn in the infield before a Mariners home game. They wanted him there on that Sunday as soon after his return home as possible while the hype was still in the air, and also because the Yankees he had devastated would be in town. Oh, God. Wasn't that applying salt to a wound? Ray wondered, it brought back memories and issues he'd rather never address again.

The date was set. Ray regretted having had Helen call before the Yankees had come to town and left. But he and all the entire Bonn tribe went. There was the signing of baseballs and photographs that would be sent back along with a CD commemorating each Yankee fan's catch or scramble for the ball. This was done for each of the fans from which the seven balls that had been extracted. He had signed and took the form letters under Mariners letterhead with him. He had written a couple of lines in longhand over his signature to personalize each one, remembering each home run individually. Mariners management had provided copies of his book for him to sign to go into each package as well. That was nice, he thought, but they must already have had one if they were in attendance that day. Oh well, what the hell.

Edna would either have been glad to know, or more probably was responsible for another ten thousand copies of *Aberrations of Relativity* being given away to fans on this occasion. Ray hoped there would be some physics professors in attendance who might at least read their copies. He hoped John Cramer would be one of them.

Ray and his family came to the pregame warm-up to meet the team. There would be a sellout crowd on hand for a change. The fanfare was ridiculous. Allie's son Cecil was ecstatic and so was Stephanie, and of course Dr. Tom. Ray's kids and their spouses all enjoyed it he could tell. Ray felt renewed guilt for having excluded them from Yankee Stadium.

There was an escort for the family taking them to stations around the field, stopping off to speak to players and coaches.

Ray wandered off and found Mac Heller; they shook hands and smiled warmly without many words going back and forth.

Mac did say, "I think we have a chance now, Ray. That one game has made one helluva difference already."

"It seems to have, doesn't it?" Ray said.

"Yeah. You gonna suit up for an at bat today, Ray?"

"Nah. Anyway, I haven't signed any contract, and I don't plan on it, in case you were worrying."

"Worrying? Are you kidding Ray? By the sixth inning I had figured out that Lesa was absolutely right; you're a *winner*." He laughed. "I'd put you in that lineup anywhere anytime; I'll bet you could still play center. If you ever do decide to sign a one-day pinch hit deal, please leave it open though such that, if a proper at bat doesn't happen on a given date, we have the next date to use you. You'd be one hell of an ace in the hole, Ray. I'd just like to know you're there on the bench, even if it's just for one at bat per series in the post season."

"You gotta get there first, Mac."

"You know. I think we just might."

Ray went to join the rest of the family. Cecil and Stephanie were talking to Hiro who was showing Cecil how he holds his bat, obviously remembering what Ray had written over his signature in his book. When Ray got there, Hiro and he did the bat handover the way they had done it in New York to Cecil and everyone's delight. There were flashes going off and video footage of it with all participants laughing.

Then they wanted an in-depth interview. Ray refused. Refusal rejected. Well, if it were to just be for a minute or two, he would consent. So, they set one up in a hurry.

"We're talking with Ray Bonn... etc. Did that game take much out of you Ray?"

"Yes, it did. I was throwing up most of the night."

"No, seriously?"

"Seriously."

"Is Lesa going to be here today?"

"Not to my knowledge," Ray ignored the indiscretion.

"I understand you will not step to the plate today, but will you make an appearance at the plate at home here at SAFECO Field this year?"

"No, I won't be able to do that."

"Why not?"

"Have you heard of retirement? I'm an old man... unofficially and officially retired. Period."

"Maybe Alto would like a rematch."

Ray could see that they had Alto lined up to come over to talk.

"Alto has better things to do than worry about an over-the-hill engineer."

Alto was there then with a hand extended. Ray took it gladly. Alto was much bigger than Ray had thought he would be, when he stood right next to him.

"How are you, Ray?" Alturis asked.

"Not bad. I'm having a hard time getting used to wearing dark glasses all the time though." They both laughed.

"Yes, it's hard having everyone know who you are all the time isn't it? Especially when you're in a slump, but I guess you wouldn't know about that, would you."

"One day isn't long enough for a slump, Alturis. Either you get lucky or you don't," Ray said.

"How would you like to come home to this crowd booing you every time you step to the plate?"

"Well, I didn't see them booing the reporter who lost you the Most Valuable Player award. That's the guy Seattle fans ought to still be booing. Those guys need to get some feedback on just how awful they are, don't you think?"

"You may be right, Ray," he said with his big smile. "Unfortunately, it doesn't work that way."

"No, I suppose not. I remember a Seattle sports reporter writing that a Longacres Derby winner belonged in an Alpo can. He's still writing that kind of crap twenty-five years later."

"Alto in an Alpo can." Alturis laughed. "Is that the image you're pushing here? That's just turrrible, Ray! Turrrible. That's just curraazy, Ray."

"You working at becoming a role model like Charles now?" They were both in stitches laughing.

"It's a tough game, Ray. You just have to hang in there and keep cheery while you're hangin'."

"Good luck today, Alto."

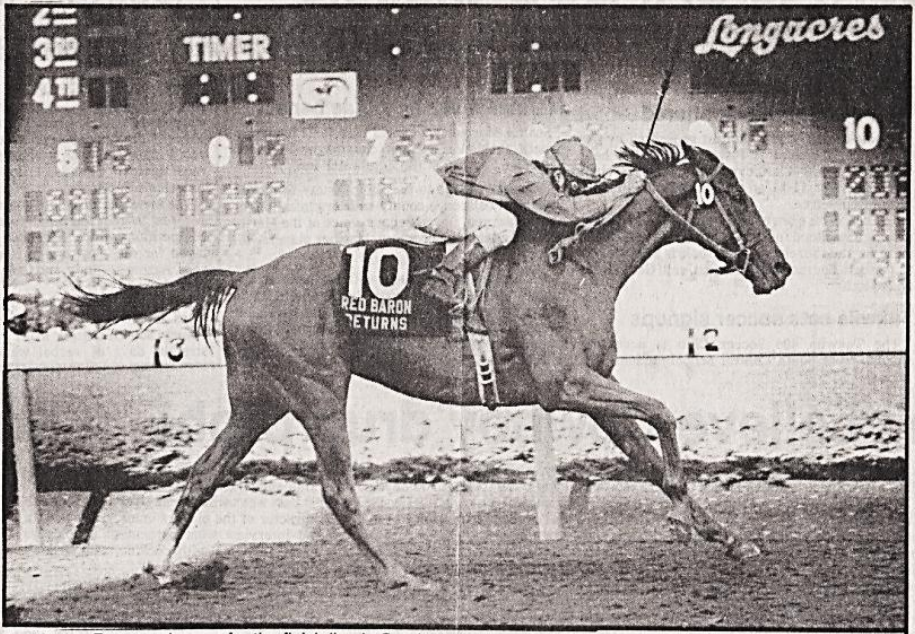
"Thanks, man," and he was gone.

Ray walked off to be with his family again. They were dragging a podium out near home plate. Dave Niehaus was more or less supervising the situation. He walked over to where Ray and the family were milling around. Ray saw the Yankee skipper coming out of the visitor's dugout toward him. Jose Pasao was following him. With understated exuberance their skipper said, "Ray, that was an amazing display back in New York. Nothing like that will ever happen again."

"It was quite a game, wasn't it?"

Then Pasao stepped up and said, "You were amazing, I have to say that."

53-1 shot wins Derby



Red Baron Returns charges for the finish line in Sunday's Longacres Derby

"Thanks," Ray said. "But you didn't actually. Anyway, you're pretty damned amazing yourself... even without the smirk."

Pasao's eyes flashed a bit of unfriendliness, but then he smiled again.

Dave Niehaus told Ray what to expect and what his family should expect. Dave got all their names. Then shortly he walked up to the podium to introduce the entire family. Dave told the crowd that they had seven baseballs to hand over to their rightful owner, but before they gave each one to a member of Ray's family to hold for him, they would show that particular ball leaving Yankee Stadium. Ray actually enjoyed watching himself rather than *being* himself anxiously standing at the plate hoping to hit each one. They had Lesa captured on the big screen too with her tears. Ray's thoughts naturally wondered to New England. He saw Helen watching him watch Lesa.

There was one each of the baseballs for Cecil, Stephanie, Helen, Allie, Jamie, Eddie, and Lisa... *Lesa*? Ray thought. But it was Eddie's Lisa... spelled correctly. Why her though? They weren't even married, were they? Ray didn't even know. Well, she was pretty; that must have been it. No, that was mean. She was brilliant, he corrected. Then Ray had to say something.

He stepped up to the podium and raised his right hand to the crowd and looked all the way around the stadium. "Thank you. Thank you." They quieted down a little. "I think my agent should be embarrassed for not having held out for that game being moved to SAFECO Field, don't you?"

Applause.

"I was talking to Mac Heller just a few minutes ago and he seemed optimistic that our Mariners are getting it turned around and we may get back into the playoffs, and who knows, why not the World Series?" The fans were eating it up.

"There's a favor I want to ask of you fans, though." Ray said. "I think Alturis Romero is as great a player as will ever suit up in a Mariners uniform, and I'm tired of hearing us fans boo him. He's a friend of mine. He is an outstanding person who did a great job for the Mariners. People do strange things for a lot of money," Ray laughed. "Trust me on this!"

Wild applause.

"Forgive him already! We all make stupid mistakes. Please give him your applause when he steps to the plate today and from now on."

Ray smiled and waved at the fans again and was done.

The family was ushered to a nice box to watch the game and Ray was given a ball to lob over the plate to get things started. It was Miguel Tejada who came out to shake his hand and then catch his pitch.

The idea of "throwing out a pitch" had brought back so many memories of high school ball. On many occasions when Jonesy had run out of steam, Ray had had to come in to close out an inning or a ball game. Ray could throw vicious curves and when the opposing team had gotten up to speed on Jonesy's fast ball, Ray's curve was unhittable. So instead of a lob, Ray threw some heat with a nasty twist on it. The ball seemed to jolt to the left and ricocheted off Miguel's mitt, much to everyone's delight, especially Miguel's.

During the game when Alturis stepped to the plate, there was a tremendous round of applause instead of the usual boos. He smiled broadly and tipped his cap to the fans to more applause. He followed that by crashing a blow deep over the left center field wall to more applause. But the Mariners ended up winning to put in place one more critical piece of their playoff puzzle.

So other than the bickering with Mariners management about whether Ray would step to the plate at SAFECO Field, baseball was over for Ray for the summer, for the year, for his life. Lesa and Helen, despite their personal problems, did a pretty good job avoiding contractual hassles.

Meanwhile, up in New England Sharon came to the Sorensen's as they had planned. Cynthia enjoyed Sharon's forthright ways almost as much as Lesa did, and so did Fredrik when he was able to be there.

Since Cynthia was family, Sharon became the peer confidant that Helen had been becoming before their unfortunate misunderstanding. Lesa didn't even know if the "mis" belonged in that word. That was the problem as she explained it to Sharon. Had they actually had what could properly be called a "misunderstanding" or did they both finally just *understand* each other and the threats they posed in their struggle for Ray's affection. She didn't know. Neither Cynthia nor Sharon could enlighten her on that subject either, although each provided insights from their very different perspectives, including each being aghast at both Helen's *and* Lesa's comments.

Sharon said, "If you ever do get some of that sperm by the way, let me have some. I'd like to have his baby too, if I could do it without the sloppy sex." They all laughed, although the two other women had been shocked by Sharon's statement. Sharon pushed it further, "Hell, since he won't see *you*, I'll bet he'd see his doctor. I'd tell him we have to check this little thing right here." She motioned down where the "little thing" in question would be situated in the male of her species, "to see if it works properly, since I operated on it. That would shock him; he'd wonder what had gone on while he was out of it!" All three laughed uproariously and she continued, "I could just mention Lesa Sorensen's name then and jerk it a couple of times – just to see that it works properly, you understand." And this she also demonstrated. "Then we'd have enough for our own purposes, and we could sell the rest. We'd be so rich I wouldn't have to worry about that damn Hippocratic oath anymore."

Fredrik was the one who had had to inform Lesa that the Bonn family had been a major success at SAFECO Field on Sunday. Fredrik did not know about Lesa's falling out with Helen, unless Cynthia had told him, and he was just a good actor at not revealing what he knew.

Finding out that bit of national news in the way that she had about Ray's public appearance was a severe blow to Lesa's ego. She was angry. As his agent, even though she knew that the appearance at SAFECO was informal, certainly not a contractual arrangement, she should have been informed. The fact that she did not answer phone calls from the Bonns did not excuse them in her mind. She read their e-mails.

Now she turned on the TV for the news, and then read every detail she could find in newspapers about that public appearance. She looked at each photo that showed any member of the Bonn family. She wanted to know what Helen, Allie, Jamie, Eddie, Cecil, and Stephanie each looked like. Since Ray had not had wallet photos and maintained no family photo file on his laptop while he was at the Sheltry, this was her opportunity. She liked the look of all of them and hated being so estranged from them all. And who was Lisa?

She decided to take care of her financial matters and to provide all of the information she found to Helen via e-mail, as a means of communication. It was characteristic, of course, that she made smart choices even in financial matters such that it was immediately obvious to Helen that Lesa was indeed a very good, even if not a professional, financial planner. Helen began to rely on her heavily for all such decisions, hoping Lesa would notice her complete trust.

Lesa got the adoptive name situation in place on all her contractual interactions. She even got the paperwork squared away with ASI after discussing her desire to extend her sabbatical, estimating the duration of her involvement with the thermodynamics book. Ed Watson readily accepted however long she felt like she needed to complete this task. It was an effort that he recognized now could be extremely significant to her career, ASI, and the scientific community generally.

During this interval, Lesa went to Sommerville to take care of things. It was an enjoyable homecoming of sorts with all her colleagues recognizing some level of quality to her recent and on-going achievements.

While there she took a carload of clothes and other personal effects with which to make herself more at home in Boston. She did not let the lease on her apartment lapse, seeing no problem with keeping it for whenever, or if ever, she wanted to go back.

So, although telephone communications were totally blocked in one direction at least, e-mail communications without personal flair became active again between the upper corners of the country. Ray and Lesa made steady enough progress on their contractual publishing obligation that Edna had set up for them. Ruth Henderson was occasionally very helpful in the active editorial wars between Lesa and Ray. Although she had not been informed as to why it was necessary, Ruth coordinated communications by phone with each of them separately.

The files that Ray was sending Lesa at a prodigious rate for their joint project were now piling up and her review and modification of this activity was taking a huge amount of time. She finally asked him in an e-mail if he could stop for a little while to let her catch up and to let them both consider the bigger picture of how this book should be structured.

Ray was not a planner; he knew that. He tended to write as recommended in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, i.e., just start at the upper left brick and get to work describing the whole edifice from there. It was a mode of operation that had worked extremely well for him when writing alone. He never expected his writing to be correct on a first draft. But he was not a prima donna about what he wrote and readily changed anything that Lesa suggested might need a change, even preferring it when she did the re-writing.

However, it was hard to coordinate two people ransacking the same file, reorganizing it at will and whim as he tended to do by himself. So Lesa asked if they couldn't come up with an outline, write single paragraphs to describe what material would go into each identified section, and then assign responsibility for each section to one primary author, which assignment they would reverse when the section was done in preliminary form.

Ray knew it was a good idea. He did not resist her management style at all. She was good at it and he was not. Thus, there were no major obstacles to progress with regard to their project because of their unique personalities; there was just a lot of work to get done. This was in stark contrast to their personal relationship, where the counterpoint, if honed to perfection, could have been a good thing, but wasn't.

Perhaps Ray's major contribution to the planning phase within her overall guidelines was the recommendation that they write the initial and final chapters first. This would have to be done by writing as if they knew the results before they started. Then, when they were finally completed with the intermediate

chapters, they would have to adjust those two chapters to be in concert with their discoveries.

At first the approach seemed almost ludicrous to Lesa. However, the more she thought about it, and saw how Ray did it (and this was a decision that was not finalized for several weeks), the more she realized that an intuitive person like Ray actually *knew* what the results would be before having proven it. She realized that she did too. That was why she had originally become so enthused about his work in the Aberrations book.

He explained to her, awkwardly by e-mail, how he had used the approach to guide his independent research when there was no one with whom to confer. Allusion to independence caused pangs of loneliness in each of them. But he went on to explain that every researcher has these intuitions that guide decisions, even the decision of what field to go into. We know what we want to discover before we embark on the exploration and have reason to believe we'll be successful or we wouldn't have begun. "By formulating the result we envision makes the dream come true," is how he framed it.

She accepted it willingly and ultimately discovered it to be true.

That is why they concentrated on conclusions that both agreed had already been determined, and soon would be proven beyond anyone's doubt. Very shortly they had documented these truths about entropy and integrated them into the file. [Again, the interested reader with sufficient background might want to refer to the conclusions documented in the book itself.]

They both agreed that although they would be dealing with the fringes, the book for which they were on contract would primarily be a thermodynamics text. Hopefully it would be so convincing that it would ultimately reside on bookshelves of a broad spectrum of people with scientific interests, but it would garner low levels of readership. It was directed at more than just physicists and to be sure, more than just those whose interests were narrowly thermodynamics per se.

Because of this genre to which they saw it belonging, they agreed that they must pay obeisance to the most well-known formula of thermodynamics, namely the 'ideal gas law:

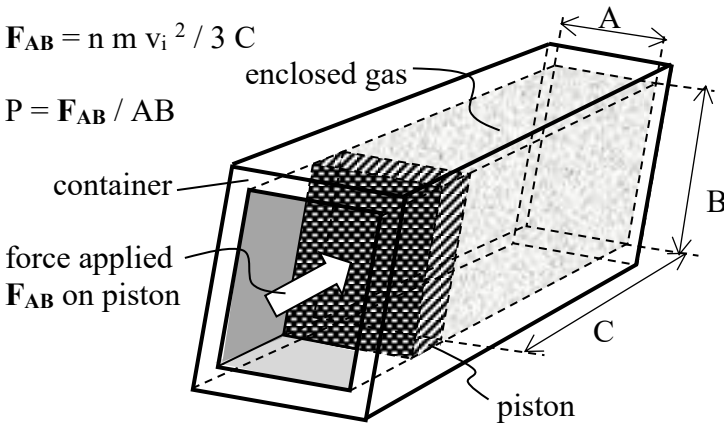
$$P V = n R T$$

Where P is the pressure, V is the volume, n is the number of moles in the volume, R is the constant, and T is the temperature – all pertaining to the system being investigated. R is the universal gas constant R depends on the units involved, but in their chosen units: $R = 8.314 \times 10^7$ erg/mol·K. A mole of a gaseous substance includes N_A times the number of atomic units in each molecule of the substance, where $N_A = 6.023 \times 10^{23}$. Bringing this formula down to the molecular level, one defines the Boltzmann constant, k which is $k = R N_A = 1.3804 \times 10^{-16}$ erg K / molecule. Clearly one can define the density of the substance as $\rho = n/V$ molecules /cm³. Manipulating the various symbols of this formula, one obtains various relationships. Ray and

Lesa chose to illustrate these relationships with initial figures in their book concerning application of the formula to exchanges of thermal energy and mechanical work. This was the comfort zone of thermodynamics practitioners.

$$F_{AB} = n m v_i^2 / 3 C$$

$$P = F_{AB} / AB$$

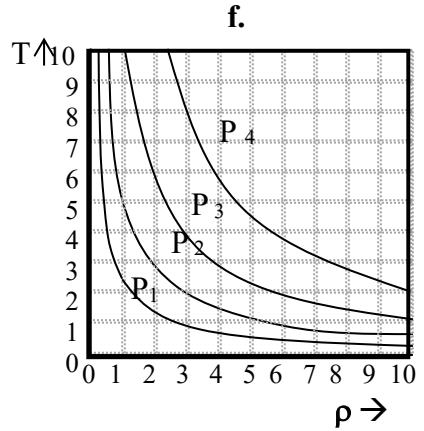
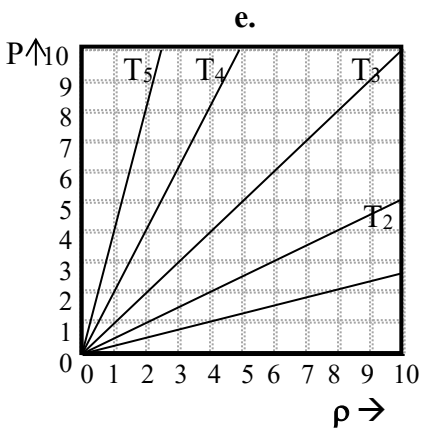
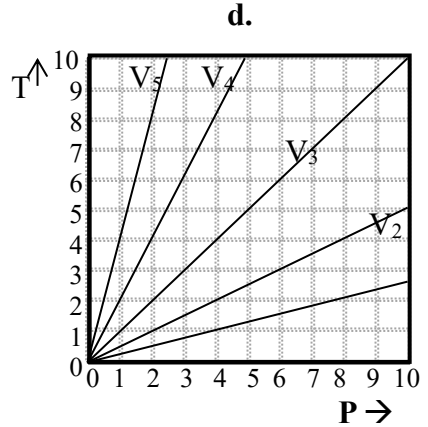
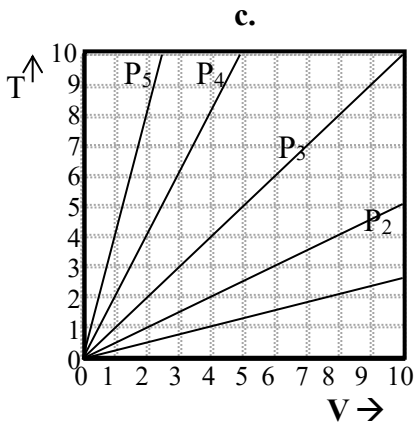
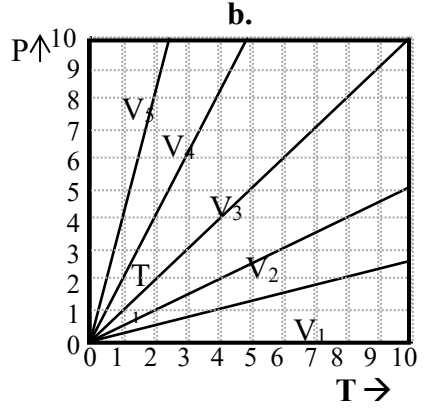
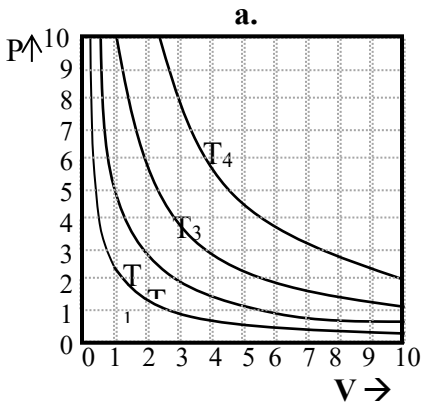


Piston arrangement for changing the volume of an enclosed gas

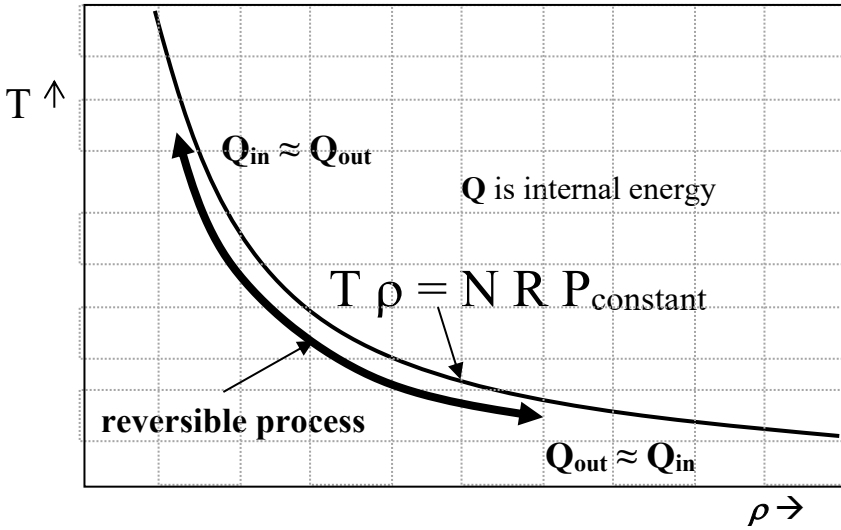
Significantly, however, the ideal gas law is an ‘ideal’ only approximately realized; it pertains exclusively to systems in equilibrium. In interesting cases particularly when irreversibility and entropy manifest themselves, the formula approximates the actual macroscopic situation at best. Steam engines and internal combustion engines are designed to set up cycles of pressure and temperature alternately being held nearly constant with adiabatic expansion and isothermal compression to effect a Carnot cycle that produces mechanical work. The velocity v_i of each molecule contributes to the force F_{AB} on a piston (the pressure P of the gas) in a cylinder. That’s how thermodynamics is used. But that wasn’t the aspect of thermodynamics that Ray and Lesa were interested in. For them, good science was all about epistemology, the exploration of the nature of the universe we live in, not in the exploitation of science for human needs or desires.

Charged particles interact to reduce electric potential energy, neutralizing their charge in the process. Rivers run and rocks roll downhill to reduce their gravitational potential energy. Thermodynamic systems become thermalized by processes that drive the system to equilibrium without changing the overall energy of that system. That is the essence of thermodynamics. Thermalization is the phenomenon that interested Ray and Lesa. That irreversible trend of closed systems to equilibrium was to be the central thesis of their book.

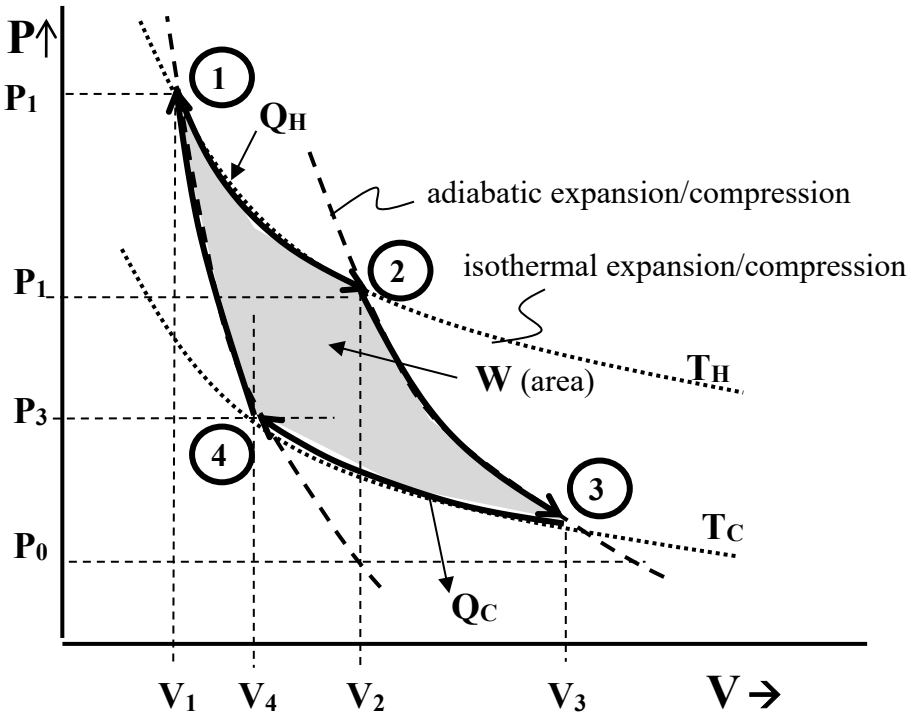
This project to which they had committed and were enthralled with should have engendered delightful discussions of the many questions to be resolved. Their formidable task was to combine discoveries of Ludwig Boltzmann and Albert Einstein into the nature of thermalization and ultimately thereby of entropy. It was complex; the persisting unresolved questions in this endeavor were extraordinarily difficult. Sadly, Lesa realized that Ray’s approach as a



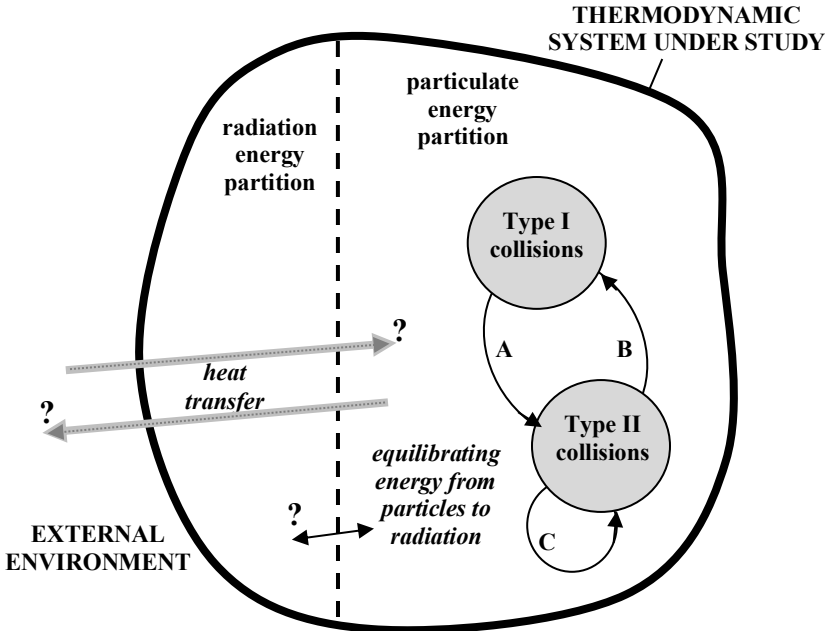
Ideal gas law functionality



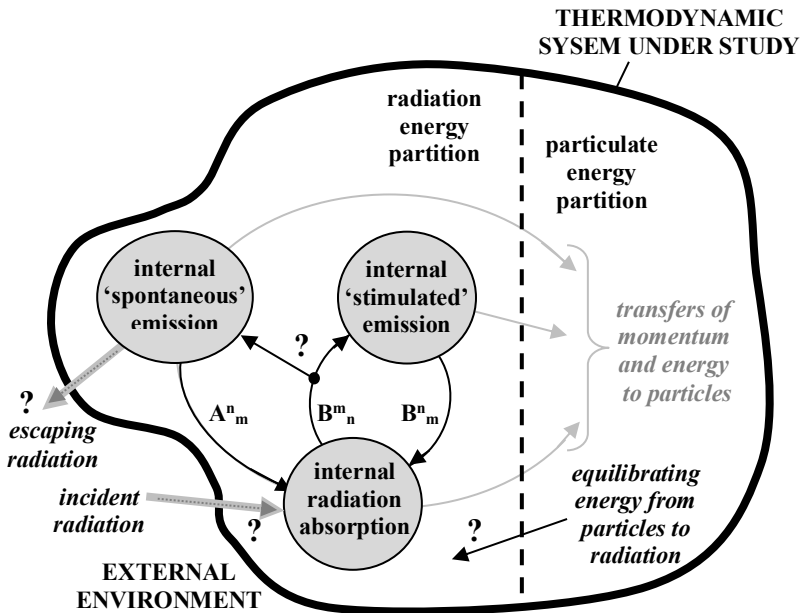
A constant pressure application of the ideal gas law to get work out of a thermodynamic system



The reversible Carnot engine cycle



Boltzmann's model of collision processes of constituent molecules within a thermodynamic system



Einstein's model of radiation processes of atoms within a thermal 'blackbody'

lonely seeker for truth was still his preferred mode of operation. She longed to be in the same room, sitting next to him with uninhibited touching as it had been back in the Sheltry hotel, sharing intuitions intimately. If she could somehow become an integral part of his intuitive processes, the soul mate aspect of their unity, of which they were both aware whenever they were together, would kick in to guide their effort. It would be of inestimable value to this project. Instead, however, they sporadically shared limited scope common intuitions via diluted e-mail or by Ruth. How wonderful it would have been to engage in the free-flowing intercourse of ideas. But he wouldn't collaborate in that way now, she knew, and she had estranged Helen as a possible ally, who could have helped get them together, at least occasionally.

And so their summer went.

Their project progressed as well as could have been expected from two collaborators who would not meet in the same room, State of the Union, or coast of a continent. They couldn't even talk on the telephone to smooth out the process.

Edna and even Ruth were now becoming frustrated with such childishness. Edna assigned the primary blame on Helen. She and Helen had not gotten along at all well while Helen had been on their earlier book-signing trip. She had been a distraction, Edna had thought, and had ended up going home after Edna insisted that Ray dedicate more time to preparation for his presentations rather than sightseeing.

In attempting to reconnect with his old lifestyle, Ray had proceeded to communicate with Andrew his desire to meet for coffee or lunch to discuss what was happening in their lives as they had often done since Ray's retirement a few years earlier. It was not that they had an awful lot in common as far as intellectual interests were concerned, but they had similar backgrounds with careers that had been entwined for a couple of decades. They knew the same people, had worked for the same bosses, and had enjoyed occasionally playing cards at one house or the other with their wives mutually involved. In short, they knew each other very well.

Andrew was very perceptive and empathetic. Ray didn't know whether he himself were or not. Although he would never before have even thought about whether he was or not, he now realized that maybe he wasn't, that people problems really weren't his forte.

Andrew teased that for an opportunity to lunch with a celebrity such as Ray, he could break away from a meeting with the corporate president or CEO and they would not only understand, but ache with jealousy. His laugh was infectious. He indicated that sales of his *Electronics* book had picked up considerably since Ray had plugged it on national TV and that he had even had to sign a few copies of it at work.

Once again, they had lunch overlooking the sound. Ray tried it without his celeb glasses partly to impress his old friend, but also because they weren't

really effective anyway. There had been a few news media photos of him wearing them, so the camouflage didn't really work very well anymore.

When he drove into the parking lot, he saw Andrew dallying outside the front door of the restaurant waiting for him. Ray hopped out and dashed across the street to where he stood. From nowhere a young boy appeared, intercepting him.

"Hi! You're Ray Bonn, aren't you?"

"Yep! I am," Ray said.

"Would you sign your card?" the boy asked brandishing a baseball card with Ray's photo on it. Ray looked at it for a minute.

"Where'd you get this?" Ray asked, bewildered. He didn't know there were any baseball cards with him on them.

The kid just shrugged.

"You're not getting royalties on that?" Andrew asked. "Have you talked to your agent recently?" he teased.

Ray didn't inform him that in fact he hadn't, and wouldn't be, but he did purpose to send her an e-mail, asking whether the cards were authorized or *pirated*, whatever that meant in such a context. It didn't really matter to him except that he envisioned a lot more signings, a prospect that he didn't particularly relish.

Ray had his pen out and signed the card without asking the kid his name. Just "Ray Bonn," he had no interest in the kid's name and interests. But there were already two other boys waiting with cards. Ray signed them in a hurry and said, "C'mon Andrew, let's eat."

As they were being seated next to the window and handed their menus, the girl, whom he remembered having waited on them on other occasions, commented tangentially on his debut at Yankee Stadium. "Will Lesa be joining you for lunch?" she asked with a knowing smile.

Oh God, he hoped not, but Ray just shook his head and ignored the other stares in the restaurant as he turned to look outward over Puget sound to avoid further eye contact.

"You implied that you'd give forty-nine million dollars to avoid this sort of thing, huh?" Andrew asked, chuckling. "It seems flattering to me, Ray."

Ray gave him a beleaguered look and said, "Andrew, I was so looking forward to just sitting down and chatting with you like old times. We could complain about any hassle in our lives we wanted to or run any idea by each other for a little peer review."

"You mean like that Internet gate controller you whipped out on that napkin right over there at that table?" Andrew offered, pointing to the table diagonally opposite where that significant event in Ray's life had occurred. Right now a couple of ladies lunched there.

When Ray and Andrew glanced in that direction, the closer of the women was thereby emboldened to approach and comment on Ray being Ray, and one or another particular aspect of Ray's greatness she felt duty bound to acknowledge. Handing him her napkin to sign.

"Oh, God, Andrew, forty-nine million would be cheap," Ray said when the woman finally fell back into her proper position.

The waitress was there to take their orders. Ray hadn't looked at his menu. What the hell, "Clam chowder."

"I think you'll like it, Mr. Bonn. It's very good today," she said, and then turning very politely, and Ray thought mercifully, to Andrew, "And you, Sir?"

Never one to quibble, Andrew said, "I'll have some of that too then," and she was gone.

"Sorry about mentioning that napkin episode," he said to Ray, "I'll try to keep focused straight ahead here."

Ray suggested, "Maybe we better just have coffee together in our own breakfast nooks from now on, Andrew."

"That would be fine," Andrew accepted. "Better. Anyhow... you said you were sick after that game."

"Yeah. Just exhaustion and dehydration, I guess, but I was pretty sick. It didn't last long though."

"How's the thermo coming? And what's the big discovery, Ray? I'm used to seeing your discoveries early on."

"Oh, yeah. Well, as you can guess, I wasn't really ready to go public with that. Lesa just sort of forced it, didn't she? I'm glad she did though, because she has all kinds of credibility in the thermo club. You followed our discussion about the Doppler shifting of the exchange photons effecting the inevitable energy losses, didn't you?" Ray asked.

"I did kind of reconstruct the concept from the two of your comments. We captured you on our recorder so I could play it back 'til I pretty much got it. It is brilliant, but that interchange with you and Lesa was priceless, Ray. She put that book right up there next to her boobs, didn't she? I was hoping you'd keep going for it. I was rooting for you to 'root' for it." He laughed heartily, and further irritated Ray with, "I guess you got to know those boobs pretty well anyway, didn't you?"

After cautioning Andrew to leave Lesa out of their conversations, Ray asked Andrew about his work. Other than brief mention of a couple of engineers Ray had known, it was mostly about everyone at Andrew's work being impressed that Andrew was a close friend of Ray's. By the time Ray got out of there signing a book and a couple of napkins, and avoiding all other eye contact, he was beat. There were a group of boys outside the restaurant waiting for him when he and Andrew came out, so Ray had to sign some more cards and a couple of scuffed up baseballs. He finally made it to his car and escaped.

He discussed the luncheon situation with Helen. She said that her friends behaved very much the same as Andrew had, one even mentioning the book snatching incident and that Ray had been a real gentleman in letting go of the book when he had.

It was worse than that. Her 'friends' wondered whether he and Lesa had "slept together", which Helen had denied emphatically, knowing it was the biblical version of the term that was being used in that context. One of the

ladies had even had the audacity to refer to what Ray must be like in bed, with them all giggling about 'The Bambino'.

They looked at each other across the breakfast nook table. Heavy sighs and wistful looks explained to each the extent to which their lives had been changed forever, and how much they did not like it.

#7 Baseball

The summer had indeed been interesting in American League baseball. The May 6th spectacle was settling into the background of a most interesting season. Tightly contested East, Central, and West Divisions were all coming down to the final weekend by mid-September.

Which players would be heading for home immediately to sit idly by the windows until time to watch a playoff game on TV and then go to bed and lay there restlessly through the night, every night all winter, was being determined. Ray Bonn was not one of those players whose baseball future was foremost on his mind. He would rather like it if the Mariners beat out the Yankees just because he was the typical non-New-Yorker baseball fan who hated Yankees and rooted for a home team. The realization that the difference between the best team in baseball and the worst team is not very much is the beginning of wisdom in baseball. Any team can beat any other team on a given day. The best team wins two out of every three games and the worst team wins one out of every three no matter who they play. The difference top to bottom is one out of three games. For every other match up the odds are even more even than that. Baseball is an old man's game of nuances and boring statistics... well, then, okay... maybe it's a middle aged and older man's game. Whatever.

Young men watch and play basketball; it's run, run, run. Football is a macho game for young bucks and middle-aged tough guys. Sure, older guys watch other sports... except for holding their breath to see if Miss Whoopeedoodle can land that axle or Lutz or whatever in hell it's called. Real men just don't do that... do they?

Many's the time in previous years, Ray had sat with Helen when the Mariners were on TV – Helen with her book, looking up if there was a home run, but otherwise elsewhere as directed by print media. Ray would read or do a crossword between RBIs, and curse after that two-thirds of the games the Mariners lost. Ray was certainly more involved than that this year, although his much busier than usual schedule didn't accommodate many days to just sit down and watch an entire game.

Ray was apprehensive about the immediate future of the Mariners. He had signed his name to a sinecure contract about a month before the end of the season. It specified that he would be on the Mariners roster should they be in

the post season, whether he chose to suit up or not, and he had no intention of actually stepping to the plate again in his lifetime. A lack of intention that he had relayed to the other parties in bad faith to the somewhat insincere contract.

With Lesa and him not even talking, that should help, he figured. However, she and Helen had seemed to get things patched up enough by mid-September (that was a four month spat, which was a long time for women, Ray figured), so now they were showing solidarity in thinking he should at least make one home appearance during the playoffs. His entire family was on that same bandwagon.

By the end of the regular season, the decision in the West ultimately went to Los Angeles by a single game. In the Eastern Division it was Boston, with the two division leaders having identical records. The top seed in the American League playoffs went to Boston based on their having beaten the Angels on more occasions than the other way around. The Angels then were seeded second. Since the Central Division had been very competitive with the Cleveland Indians ultimately pulling it out, with Detroit and the Minnesota Twins in a virtual tie for second, the internecine struggle left the winner with less wins than either the Yankees or Mariners. Although both the Yankees and Mariners ended up with better records than Cleveland, Detroit or Minnesota, there was only one spot open. The Wild Card was determined between the Yankees and Mariners, and because of Ray Bonn, that ended up with the Seattle Mariners having won one more game than the Yankees.

Thus, by having suited up on only that one Saturday in early May, Ray Bonn had indeed succeeded in achieving that same great upset that Joe Boyd had. But Joe had had to struggle through a transmutation to a devil-inspired Joe Hardy to deny the Yankees a pennant. Well, Ray thought, maybe he had as well.

It had to have chafed George Steinbrenner and that might seem reason enough to suggest a follow-up interaction between the two principal million-dollar wheelers and dealers on none other than Larry King Live where it had all started. That would be some kind of rematch.

So, like anything for which a million-dollar excuse can be made, whether the excuse is valid or not, that rematch of wills would eventually come to pass of course. How else does the world work. But long before that and before the American league Wild Card race was determined, Ray Bonn was being contacted by his default agent via e-mail regarding his suiting up and appearing at the plate before the home crowd. In fact, one of the envelopes addressed to Lesa on their last day at the Sheltry had contained the letter with a contract enclosed that had already explored such playoff possibilities.

Mariner fans naturally had felt that their grand venue SAFECO Field had been snubbed for the Big Apple's Yankee Stadium in the Bronx. Ray had told them so himself, having blamed his agent, for which she was still no little bit miffed. They wanted to see this sensational corn-fed bumpkin of theirs for themselves; he was, after all, born and bred, reared and retired in the Northwest, and therefore, *theirs*. For all they knew he had cost their team the

full forty-nine million dollars and so why shouldn't they get to see him swing a bat. They, the ultimate source of revenue, deserved something for their money, did they not.

Throughout the summer Lesa had provided each enticement to Ray with her own recommendation. Ray refused each, saying that it had not really been his idea to take all that money in the first place. Lesa could suit herself about suiting up, but he would not. He observed that he had probably had a huge amount to do with the Mariners sudden reversal of luck whether he shook any more Mariner fans' hands at home or not.

But as the hot summer had worn on, first there was the All-Star Game for which he was a unanimous selection by fans across the continent and there was much media hype about his participation in the Home Run Derby associated with the All-Star break. Ray stood pat, refusing even a personal appearance in a broadcast booth for the All-Star Game coverage.

Later in the summer as the Mariners' fortunes continued to turn more and more favorable, Ray Bonn became the name of hope that might even help them bring home a much-coveted World Series to Seattle. Still Ray was having no part of it. Occasionally he would have to make a press release (or at least his agent insinuated that he must) to the effect that however flattered he might be with the affection of Mariners fans, that unusual event at Yankee Stadium had been a one-of-a-kind fluke that would not happen again. Ray Bonn was, after all, a physicist, not a major league ballplayer and he was very busy on the latest developments in uncovering the cause of entropy that he considered of greater significance in the overall frame of things. Neither Lesa nor Helen would allow him to use the valid excuse of being just too damned old!

In fact, however, he was working extremely diligently on their pursuit of the origins of irreversibility, with he and Lesa e-mailing and transferring files on a daily, even multiple times daily, basis as the volume and significance of the book for which they were on contract grew. These interactions were never cluttered with anything at all to do with baseball, or anything in the least bit personal, and were most definitely not romantic in any way.

Lesla chose completely separate e-mails to communicate matters as his agent and one could not have told by reading them that she was anything more or less than an agent selected at random from a list of those so employed, although certainly one at the top of any such list.

The arm bending came via a completely different route. Helen.

Lesla did not consider herself to have switched from Ray as a father image to Fredrik, who was by now irrefutably her father in every possible respect. That would have left Ray with his freedom even if in somewhat of an emotional limbo, and indeed he did feel himself to have been both freed and emotionally limboed. He had never been a father figure as far as Lesla was concerned, in any very direct sense at least. It had for whatever reason always been much more of a romantic attachment for her. And, no matter what he might have said to anyone in that regard, it had for him as well, of course. Ray did not typically acknowledge the extent of that to anyone but during his darkest

longings in the middle of nights, when sleep would not come, it was always Lesa who wandered, a lonely moaning ghost, through his thoughts. He wondered sometimes about the extent of the impotence he had demonstrated at the Sheltry. Had it maybe have simply been that and not fidelity as he had so prided himself?

But because that attachment had not ceased for Lesa, however much Ray attempted to terminate any such romantic relationship whatsoever with her, Lesa was still working the bridge between universes. As she had intimated to the small *family* of friends in the suite in New York City the day after the big game, that would involve her working directly with Helen Bonn, pilot of the other universe. That was essential, if any viable liaison was to accommodate Ray's ready commute. Lesa and Helen had instantly become great friends – a friendship dramatically interrupted very shortly, of course, but which was finally being restored much more securely. Lesa's efforts in this regard were indefatigable.

Both women knew the extent of the attachment of the other for the object of their own affection, and Helen even understood the broad outlines of Lesa's planned construction, to all of which Ray remained, if not totally oblivious, at least totally uninvolved. Because of their intimate working relationship there was in effect already an effective bridge in its own right even if a bit shaky for someone as hesitant and emotionally awkward as Ray to traipse back and forth with ease.

Lesa was able to entice Helen to apply pressures in that other universe – the one in which Ray had once again taken up his solitary residence... one might almost say hermitage... after having left Boston, thinking Lesa securely in the care of loving parents in her own private universe.

Helen, their children, and grandchildren having not seen Ray in uniform except on TV were somewhat... if not totally... irritated with him. Any or all of them would have loved to have been present on that momentous occasion back in Yankee Stadium. Had he only told them that it would have been all right with him the entire family would have been airborne. However, he had not thought that it would be all right, of course, and had hoped to minimize the disaster by avoiding any more of an emotional contingent in his corner. They naturally yearned to see him repeat the feat before them live, and of course, with all their friends in attendance. Never mind whether it would be possible for anything similar to ever be reenacted.

Helen had provided much of the impetus for Ray to go ahead and pick up the baseball souvenirs, doing his duty to those kind Yankee fans who had given up their trophies. Now Helen and Allie began to work on him. For some reason Eddie seemed to care as well. It was clear that Jamie, as busy as he was, would also enjoy the sense of displaying his notable slugger of a father at SAFECO Field. The grand kids? Well, if Hiro was there, why not, Grumps?

Helen had the seven balls all lined up on the mantle in the family room labeled in the neat little cases into which they had each been sealed. It was a

shrine to the family's awe at his performance. It irritated him. Sometimes he would notice them and say, "Helen, put those god damned things away?"

Helen instead insisted that their whole family had been paid tribute in receiving those seven symbols of Ray Bonn's greatness, and she was not going to let him take that much satisfaction away from them since they had been denied access to the actual event. That day had indeed been a rather special reunion, Ray had also thought.

But for his family and Mariner fans generally, it was not enough.

Later with the season nearing completion and definite possibilities of a playoff berth opening up for the Mariners, Lesa received the contract for a million dollars just to include Ray on the playoff roster with no obligation to even show up for a single game. It was to keep the Ray Bonn mania alive in Seattle, as she understood it, she told him. Helen actually got upset with Ray for resisting such a sinecure, huffy actually, and so Ray did sign it and Lesa faxed the contract to Mariners headquarters just in time to meet the deadline. Thus it was that Ray was a reluctant entry on the roster for the playoffs.

Lesa had relayed the story to Helen of how George Steinbrenner had intimated that the ignoble defeat of the Yankees on one Saturday in May would in no way affect their inevitably clinching the American League pennant. But of course, it had had a tremendous amount to do with the demise of the Yankees as everyone came to realize much to George's chagrin. The Bonn family, other than Ray, seemed to think it particularly amusing. Ray had secretly hoped that the Mariners would not screw that up for George, having seen the possibility in the offing.

As Ray had surmised, rather than subdue the harangue to get him to play, placing him on the roster would become a bigger and bigger issue with Mariner baseball fans, Helen, the rest of the Bonn family, and his wheeling and dealing million-dollar agent.

When it finally became obvious that the Mariners had beaten out the Yankees for the Wild Card spot Larry King Live hooked up with Lesa to go on the air live with George Steinbrenner. She wanted Ray to go on with her... well, at least she said she did. But there was no way Ray would ever get in the middle of those two million-dollar wheeler-dealers again. Ever! But on the Eve of the first Mariners-Red Sox playoff game that's exactly what Larry King had scheduled, and the Bonn family was attuned to Larry that night.

His video clip intro was a bit longer than usual with shots of Lesa negotiating with Steinbrenner on that earlier Larry King Live show, and Ray with his head below the bar cringing and then suggesting to Larry that he jerk Lesa off the show with "the hook".

Larry started out with George Steinbrenner, Larry asking the notorious bad loser, who had the opportunity to demonstrate it all too seldom, just how this had all happened to the all-star lineup of the New York Yankees. Did it trace back in any way to May 6th?

"Of course, it traces back to May 6th, Larry. I think I was the victim of a major league hustle and I'm thinking of going to court. Did you see those two on that video clip, Larry? That was the biggest hustle I've ever seen. That makes the hustle in the movie *The Sting* seem like child's play. I'm here to tell you, Larry. It's criminal."

"Can you sue somebody for hustling you, George? I thought you just broke their fingers." Larry fanned the flames of the uncontrolled laughter that began with the video clip.

"It's not funny, Larry." But Larry laughed anyway. "A lot of people got ripped off for well over fifty million dollars total. That's a lot of mullah. Where's that Dr. Lesa Landau now, Larry? You said she'd be on your show. I knew Ray wouldn't show, but I thought at least Lesa had the chutzpah."

Larry was still laughing and said, "Well, there's something you need to know, George. We looked everywhere for a Lesa Landau and it seems as though there isn't any."

"Isn't any? What the [bleep] are you talking about Larry? This Lesa woman was not just a figment of my imagination. That was a real woman all right – even if the tears weren't."

Larry continued laughing at George's tirade. "Well, George it seems that she changed her name on us. It's now Dr. Lesa Sorensen. Lesa, come on out here."

Lesa stepped up to the bar and sat on one of the stools. "I'll have mine straight up, Larry. Hi, George. How's business?" Larry faked the moves of getting her a drink.

Watching then, Ray was stunned. He was bowled over by her beauty and personal charm that he had not seen for so many months now. He could hardly blink he didn't want to miss any of it.

"Isn't she beautiful, Ray?" It was Helen. Ray looked over at her.

He could tell she had noticed his reaction. His face actually hurt with trying not to show his feelings for Lesa. He got it under control.

"Yeah. She always was." Then he was watching the show again.

George was begrudging in response to Lesa's humor. "Crummy, Lesa. Crummy! What do you have to say for yourself, young Lady? You sold me a bill of goods. Those tears! Lesa, have you no shame?"

"You must be getting early Alzheimer's, George. We never had a deal with you. The deal was with the Seattle Mariners. Remember?"

George looked at her with a quick jerk of his head knowing that she remembered what he had told her about the Mariners not footing the entire bill.

"I don't think the Mariners are complaining at this point, do you?" Lesa pursued. "If you made some kind of an under the table deal with the Mariners, maybe the Comish should look into it for you."

"Okay, okay, Lesa. Do you remember what I told you up in your private room up there in the stadium that day?"

"Every word of it, George, every word. I have eidetic memory, remember? But are we actually going to tell the audience what you told me?"

"Why not Lesa. It's just one more pretty finger." George was good at this kind of humor.

Lesla wove her fingers together, flipped them over bottoms out, and pushed them out in front of her. They popped like popcorn. Ray noted that he had never seen her do that.

"Well, let me explain to everyone what actually happened then.

"Okay, I was sitting there in George's private room alone because I knew how mad my client was at me for getting him into this deal. I was hiding out. Ray had never told me anything about his abilities with a bat except what he had told Larry on this show about having hit 'a few'," she indicated quotes, "home runs in high school. I understand now that some of them may still be in orbit." There was laughter in the studio. "But you and I didn't know that back then, did we."

They all laughed, the Bonn family finding it particularly amusing.

"Anyway, the fact that he hit seven grand slams, didn't humiliate himself, and made nearly fifty million dollars in the process wouldn't matter to my client. He's a man of principle. He was mad at me out of principle. So anyway, George here was a gentleman and gave me a hideout where I could pull it together before the extra innings. I really did appreciate it, George."

George smiled at this nominal praise.

"But then when it went into extra innings," Lesa looked at Larry now, "George came in to tell me to get out there and mingle." She left out the monetary reasons. "So I did. The last time I saw George was when he called me an escort to get me down to where the visiting players come out, so I could hitch a ride back to the Sheltry with my client. But..." and she made dramatic motions with her hands, "this is *very* important everybody. Before I left George here, he says to me, 'You just remember, Lesa, this is *not* gonna be the year the Yankees lose the pennant, so don't get any ideas.'"

A wide-eyed Lesa paused, look still at Larry and then turned toward George. "And that's word-for-word, George. Word-for-word... I've got a good memory... remember?"

George looked disgruntled.

"You lost the pennant, George. Do you want my analysis of why you lost the American League pennant?"

"No, I don't, girl. But it's your turn for a little honesty here. Whatever happened to your boy? Rumor has it he went back to mama." Ray was irritated that George would make such an insinuation, but it didn't seem to bother the rest of his family, not even Helen.

Lesla hopped right in there. "If you mean my client, Ray Bonn, yes he is back where he always was, doing exactly what he was doing before – science. He's doing it in collaboration with me because we're both primarily physicists. We expect the book to be published this winter sometime. The title will be *Origins of Irreversibility*; you ought to buy one," a pause, "maybe twenty thousand." She laughed, very proud of herself. "you need to know about entropy."

Then Larry took a break and played more video clips of Ray Bonn and Lesa Sorensen (then Landau) sharing the flickering screen.

Luckily Helen had never told any of the Bonn family about the rift between them and Lesa, so they were all very enthused about the program and very pro Ray's agent, having long since accepted that there must never had been anything romantic between her and their father.

The next segment of the show began with clips from the extra innings, when Ray was a predictable grand slam hitter and Lesa was a polished sports commentator, both so different from their appearance and the coverage from the second inning.

Larry re-introduced the two guests. In this segment they were not set against each other. They did a very credible and quite pleasantly coordinated commentary on the upcoming Mariner series with the Red Sox. Would Ray suit up to have a go at the Green Monster?

"No, certainly not in Boston, probably not this series."

Would there be another series for the Mariners this year without it?

George thought not.

Lesa thought it would go the full five games and the Mariners would have to win it in Boston.

Could they?

She thought they could; they'd been one of the hottest teams in baseball here at the end and they seemed to match up well against Boston.

If they go another round, could the Mariners take the American League pennant?

Lesa thought so.

George didn't.

Surely if the Mariners got to the World Series, they'd activate Ray, wouldn't they?

George said there was no doubt. You pay a certain amount of money and you don't tolerate any namby pamby.

"Namby pamby"? Lesa exclaimed. "Ray, namby pamby?" Lesa laughed loudly slapping the table. "George, you weren't watching last May, were you?"

"So, as his agent what will you be recommending to him from here on out, Lesa?" Larry asked. "I know the Mariners are trying to work a deal. What kind of a deal would you recommend your client sign? In the World Series could we expect to see Ray Bonn as designated hitter in SAFECO Field?"

Larry was asking her what only Ray could answer with Ray watching her. And, Helen was watching Ray watch her.

"Larry, you know that this isn't my decision to make, but here's what I think. I think that if the Mariners get the World Series back at home in a game that would win it for them, Ray might ride the bench in case a situation came up where one swing of the bat could win it."

"Oh, God," Ray said and got up to go into his office to the disdain of his entire family.

George asked Lesa how come she changed her name since he had seen her last. "You been hiding out under an assumed name?"

"George, I found out who my real father is. We did a DNA analysis and as I had suspected, my blue eyes didn't come from either of my brown-eyed parents."

Larry's eyebrows crested, "Whoa! Is that right?"

"Yes, it is right. Although of course everyone believes eye color to be derived from a simple dominant gene with brown eyes dominant over blue, so brown-eyed parents could, of course, have a blue-eyed daughter easily enough. Eye color transmission is much more complex than that, but not usually. The fact that no one else on either side of my family had blue eyes would have made me somewhat of a statistical fluke to say the least. Luckily DNA tests are more conclusive.

"So yes, I know who my blue-eyed father is now, thanks to Ray. Importantly, there are many reasons why my real father, Fredrik Sorensen is so much my preference. He was in love with my mother from childhood, but for various reasons, and none of them very good, they were never allowed to marry. Love trumps everything though, Larry. Love wins.

"My adoptive mother and father," she paused, "my biological father, are wonderful people. I've been living with them this summer while I've been working on the book with Ray, and it is just marvelous to not be an orphan any more... and get Ray off his 'father figure' kick." Lesa laughed. Helen knew she added that for Ray's benefit, but Ray was no longer watching.

"Do you get with Ray often – to go over the book?" Larry asked.

"No, I haven't, Larry. I don't know where the time goes, but I haven't seen Ray since he flew home and I went up to Mom and Dad Sorensen's almost five months ago now. But we e-mail and transfer files every day."

"Do you miss him? You seemed pretty close," Larry probed.

Lesa didn't answer right off and there were shadows on her forehead. Finally, "Yeah," was all she could come up with.

Larry too lingered until it was obvious that it made Lesa nervous and there would be no more comment in any case.

It made Helen nervous too.

"Will you take a break and go to the game if Ray... er... your client should happen to be playing?"

"I would hope to Larry, but I don't know. There are a lot of conditionals and hypotheticals there. How can I say?"

The program was about over. A few pretty meaningless questions were phoned in from the audience.

And that was that.

The Red Sox series was two blow outs in Boston, then two blow outs the other way in Seattle, and back to Boston for game five. In extra innings the Mariners pulled it out. The Indians had beaten the Angels in four and so it was Seattle and Cleveland, with the Mariners having home field advantage in the

seven-game series. They took the first two in Seattle and won one of the three in Cleveland. They came home to take the sixth game and win the American League pennant.

Through both these series Ray had taken heat from the Mariners, the fans, and the Bonns, for taking Mariner money to take up a roster spot and not allow himself to be used in any capacity whatsoever. Ray had to accept responsibility or be considered a traitor in Mariner country where he lived.

When Lesa called to talk to him, he knew what was on her mind. He didn't figure it would be her telling him how much she loved him at any rate. It would be business. It was... sort of.

She knew he was in an awkward position. She said, "Ray, what do you think of what I proposed on Larry King Live? What if we said that if it gets to the sixth or seventh game you will be available to pinch hit if you could put them ahead with one swing of the bat?" There was a terribly long pause. "Ray, are you alone on the phone?"

Ray looked across the office to where Helen was watching him. "Yeah."

"Ray, just stare at the phone like you're thinking about a proposal."

"I am," he said.

"Okay, keep doing it, but listen to me without saying anything or thinking, 'Oh God,' okay? Because women know when you think it."

"Yeah."

"I love you. Not in any irritating make-Ray-Bonn-uncomfortable kind of way, Ray, but in the way of 'til-the-sunlight-touches-your-face kind of way. No matter what anyone ever says or does, I am in love with you, and only you, and if I have to wait to lay a rose on your grave without ever even seeing you in person again, I will never love anyone else but you. Do you understand me?"

"Yes."

"Do you still love me too?"

"Yes."

"Thank you, Ray. Now back to business," and it was indeed back to business.

"I have thought about your situation and it seems pretty untenable to not do something on this World Series issue. I think the contract I told you about is the best we can do without getting you tarred and feathered and ridden out of town on a rail, don't you?"

"Yes, it seems like it to me too."

"I don't think I should come out there for it though, do you? It might make just too much of you and me, and we know about you and me, without making any hype, don't we?"

"No, and yes, indeed we do."

"I'll fax you the contract in a minute then."

"Thank you, Lesa." He paused for a long while thoughtfully. There was no click on the other end. Finally, he said, "I love you, Lesa." He listened a

moment longer and very quietly she said, "Thank you, my Darling." Then there was a click, and then he hung up the phone.

"Was she still there?" Helen asked, laughing at what she thought was play-acting to tease her.

He ignored that question.

"You agreed to play, didn't you?"

"Yes," he said. "I did."

The fax was already printing, and Helen went over to see what kind of business arrangement had been made.

The National League playoff series had been hard fought too, but the tough luck New York Mets finally took the best record in baseball through the playoffs and into a World Series. But the All-star Game having gone to the American league again with more Hiro escapades gave the Mariners home field advantage. The first two and final two games, should it go that far, would be played at SAFECO Field.

Ray Bonn's contract was announced to the great relief of Mariner fans, but once it sank in that Ray Bonn would go up at most for one at bat, and that only if it could win the series or hold it for a final game, made many fans resentful. In each of the previous series there had been yelling for Ray Bonn to appear, and he didn't show anywhere, not in uniform, plain clothes in the dugout, in an announcers' booth, talk show, the stands, nowhere. What kind of Mariner was he? Take the money and abandon the team. That was what he was.

Well, by hook or crook the series ended up back in Seattle for games six and seven, and the cogs of commerce stuck in Ray's contract dragged him to the pregame warm-up for game six. The Mariner players had liked the terms he had insisted on in his contract. He would help them if a single swing of the bat could do it and leave them to do what they had so far been able to do without him.

Mac Heller was a bit tense but friendly and seemed to really like having Ray as his ace in the hole. The Mets players looked over at Ray as he walked around saying a few words to several Mariners he had gotten to know a little the last two times he had been at pregames.

Mac couldn't keep the press off him on this occasion, but Ray had steeled himself for it, and as to whether, and to what degree, his previous appearance in a major league venue had been a fluke, he really didn't know any better than they did. He knew that there had been a couple of his at bats about which the Yankees had not been sufficiently concerned and so had made it easy for him.

Was Lesa here?

He didn't think so.

Would it be harder without her moral support?

Well, that really didn't make much sense, did it? She was his agent and the incentives were essentially the same as in New York. She was on commission for anything he made, so of course he had her moral support, wherever she happened to be.

Would she be watching the game?

Oh, he would think so.

He sat the bench in the sixth game and although the fans were yelling a mantra for Ray Bonn in the eighth, the Mariners were up one and his contract protected him. J. P. Lutz saved the game to preserve the win.

There would be a game seven. Ray thought his hemorrhoid would start acting up with "another day on that hard-old bench," but he was not about to bring a donut into the dugout as Helen had humorously suggested.

Pedro "who's-your-daddy-now" Hernandez, whose pitching had been stellar since getting off the disabled list, was on the mound. Pedro had *owned* the Mariners back when he had pitched for Boston in the American League. He had owned them in an earlier game in this series as well, and in this final game of the series he had shut them out again through eight.

Felix Molina was pitching for the Mariners and he was doing a fine job, but he had given up a run in the third and two in the fifth on an error. He had lasted through nine innings without relief.

And here it was the bottom of the ninth with the Mariners down three. A pinch hitter for the catcher got a base hit between third and short. It actually was deflected off the webbing of the third baseman's glove. That had bounced it off the wrist of the shortstop, who had laid out in extension for it. Then it was Hiro who dribbled a bunt to third on a hit and run. Then they seemed to languish with a pop up and fielder's choice. But Pedro got too much steam too close to Paul Bloomberg, ticking his jersey, so the bases were loaded.

The hated contract came into play at this point. Joe Brett of Hot Box Sports had been bemoaning to Tim McCarthy the fact that Lesa (he guessed it was Sorensen now) was not here to expound upon the phenom who was her client. She would have confidence that he would come through once again, of course.

"But honestly, what do you think, Tim? You seem more convinced that Ray was a flash in the pan who got lightning in a bottle one day five months ago, and it won't be there this time. Isn't that what you think?"

"Well, baseball is a game of statistics, Joe. Newcomers always think it's repeatable phenomena, but it isn't. It's merely statistics and however impressive it was to have hit seven balls out of Yankee Stadium on one day five months ago when fifteen balls went out altogether, this is quite a different situation. *No* balls have gone out of here today. And I don't think one is likely to. Pedro Hernandez has been baseball-card-photo-perfect today with only four hits and nothing approaching any fence.

"So. Number 50 meets reality today, Joe. That's what I think. It isn't because he's pushing fifty either, at least ten years older than anyone with a reasonable shot against Pedro, but Ray's whole approach to baseball is 'certainty'. He has the hitter's ability to see the pitch in slow motion, but that is merely an improvement on the odds. To say that Ray has even a one-in-four shot to connect with the ball in this situation is pushing it in my estimation. I think the Seattle Mariners' dream of a World Series victory ends right here. Close, but not good enough."

Ray had not actually prepared himself in thought, and here it was.

Mac Heller came over to him. Mac had been eyeing him the last two at bats wondering whether a tie was something to use Ray for, even if Ray would not be contractually obligated. Mac figured he could have convinced him. But now there was no choice, the contract took over.

The crowds were all yelling, "Ray Bonn, Ray Bonn, Ray Bonn." It was deafening. In Yankee Stadium the fans had been generous; these fans were rabid. Mac called time out to slow things down a little. The batboy was touching Hiro's untouchable bat case and finding the bat that Hiro had told him to get if this situation arose. The batboy actually tipped the case so Hiro could see it from second base as he watched the dugout. The batboy pointed at the center bat; Hiro nodded.

Ray took the bat and without a single swing, or a flex of his shoulders or arms, a sullen Ray Bonn walked directly to the plate.

Pedro looked at the strange site of the old man, digging in at the plate. He must have thought, my God, how can this guy have caused so many problems for the Yankees? The Yankee pitchers must be pretty shabby again this year if this was their Daddy now.

But it isn't as though Pedro is going to throw easy stuff to anybody. It isn't even clear that he would know how to do that. Thus, when his catcher squatted down after a manager-infield conference on the mound the decision was clearly to throw a slider away for the first pitch. That was what Ray and Mac had thought he would do.

"It may be a little out, but if you snug up to the plate a bit, it might be the most hittable pitch you'll get," Mac had said. "This ain't gonna be easy, Ray."

Ray got up there real close and got ready, half expecting to be driven back. He began his swing about the same time as Pedro and had time to get his bat to the same location at the same time Pedro got the ball there for a grand reunion. There was a major macroscopic collision in this case that produced a prodigious explosion of sound and the ball sailed well over the furthest reaches of the center field wall.

And that, as they say, was that. No prolonged pitcher-batter duel, no drama, no nothing. Just Bam!

Ray Bonn was totally amazed at himself and at Mac Heller as well. He didn't just stand there though, but he wasn't running either until well after the ball had settled into cozier environs. He carried Hiro's bat with him in his right hand as he had the last few at bats in Yankee Stadium. Hiro doesn't like his



bats thrown, Ray was thinking, as a sort of justification for this stupid behavior he had adopted.

"Well, Tim," Joe Brett taunted, "how sure are you now that it's just statistics? You were one of those who doubted the authenticity of Ray Bonn. What do you think now? When Ray goes up to the plate it's like... no big deal. Haven't had a bat in your hand for thirty years? Seven grand slams. It's the final game of the World Series? 'Oh, okay, gimme a bat. Grand slam.'"

"It doesn't make any sense to me either, Joe, but I guess it doesn't have to. Ray Bonn has just done the unbelievable in my book. He may say that anything that happens is by definition not impossible, but this *was* in my book! The devil had to have been in the stands here somewhere, Joe. Didn't he?" They both laughed. "Where is Lesa?"

"Well," Joe Brett said, "it happened! We saw it. And having happened is, as Ray Bonn would say, proof enough that there must be a simple physical explanation. Maybe that's true, but a walk off grand slam to win a World Series is pretty spectacular, isn't it?"

Indeed. This was not like winning a game on the sixth of May. This was the final game of a World Series, the first World Series ever won by the Seattle Mariners. As Ray approached the plate, he could gage the difference; it was like running into a volcano or a nuclear explosion. There were Mariners on top of Mariners on top of Mariners jumping and screaming like idiots. He tried to protect Hiro's bat holding it closer to him so it wouldn't get twisted out of his grip and when as he got to home plate, he was wafted up in the air atop a mountain of seething baseball players. He had the bat held high, and he was sailing around the infield with no control whatsoever.

When he was finally put down on terra firma there was Mac Heller to put an arm around his shoulder and Felix Molina was yelling and laughing at him with an accent Ray could not understand for the life of him. And then there was Hiro. Ray broke free and rushed over to him to hand him his bat in an approximation of the ceremony they had established at Yankee Stadium. Hiro seemed pleased that his bat had been protected from the riotous throng.

There were champagne bottles popping and Ray was being dowsed with the golden fizz. Then the reporters had him.

"Ray, in your wildest dreams did you ever envision something like this happening when you were on the Larry King Live show and your fellow physicist put you on contract to swing a bat in the majors."

"No, of course not."

"There is a lot of speculation about how you accomplish feats like this. Lesa Landau..." Ray put up his hand to object, "It's Sorensen. She wants to be called Lesa Sorensen; it's her name." So then the reporter rephrased it, "Lesa Sorensen indicated that the neurons in your brain fire more quickly than other people's, is that true?"

"I don't know. They fire quickly, I guess, but any such chronometrical differences are tiny. That's just hype."

"Is there some law of physics that you know about that enables you to swing a bat more efficiently than other people?" the reporter probed.

"No."

"Then how do you do it?"

"Well, Mac Heller and I discussed what Pedro would probably want to throw me and we were right! It's as simple as that; an extremely fast pitch hitting a solid bat – for every action there's a reaction."

"As simple as that, he says. Do you guys believe that, Joe, Tim? I'm having a hard time with it."

"I don't know whether Tim's buying it either, but I think there might be some baseball players reading that book of Ray's over the winter, what do you think?" Joe said.

Then Ray was told to proceed into the locker room area. He looked around for his family and found Helen and the rest of a laughing Bonn troupe being escorted down to the field. He grabbed Helen to proceed with him into the locker room. The rest of the family after their hugs stayed around with the kids. Various of the players and media were talking with them and asking them about their dad, granddad, whatever.

In the locker room the ceremony was under way; the champagne pouring was already at epidemic proportions. The trophy was being stroked and handed about by the Mariner ownership. Finally, it was handed to Mac Heller, who looked happier than Ray had ever seen him. Then Ray was grabbed and dragged up to the makeshift stand and asked if he knew he was going to be able to get that ball out of the yard.

No, he hadn't known. He had champagne in his eyes. Mac whispered some advice as champagne and noise kept coming.

Did he know that he was the World Series MVP?

No, of course not! Why? More champagne was squirted at him. He spluttered and wiped his eyes to get the champagne out of them. He had only had one at bat. How do you get MVP of a seven game series with one at bat? There were a lot of heroes, not him. "That doesn't make sense," Ray insisted finally.

Mac got Ray's ear and said, "The words are just 'Thank you!' Ray."

"Oh," he smiled then as he grabbed the trophy and held it up saying, "Thank you." Much easier.

Oh, God.

Hours later he was home with his family, exhausted.

Then his cell phone did its characteristic ring tone that separated it from all the other tones that had been going off all evening. It was Lesa. He stuck it to his ear and drifted out the front door. No one seemed to even have seen him sneak out.

Lesa sensed some such maneuver and when she noticed the quieter background, she said, "Ray..." and then there was the longest pause. She terminated it with, "You are so unbelievable, Ray, that being your soul mate is the greatest feeling anyone could ever have. Thank you. It was harder

watching from two thousand miles away than being up in George's private room crying and hoping you would hold me in your arms pretty soon."

"Oh, Lesa, are you with your mom and dad?"

"Yes," she said. "They are your most ardent fans, Ray. We all liked getting to see your family, Ray. It helps in trying to know them. I realize how much they missed by not getting to be there in Yankee Stadium."

"Well, they got the whole enchilada tonight, didn't they?"

"I got to be there with you all by myself riding home in the limo with you. Ricky got us up the back way, remember, Ray. I got to be with you naked that night. Do you remember that, Ray?"

"That night when the pink-eyed monster saved me may have been the most fantasy-filled night of my life, Lesa. Don't you dare think otherwise or that I will ever forget it."

"Oh, thank you Ray."

"Thank *you*, Lesa. You sure put together a great contract for us again, huh?"

"It was, wasn't it? I'll let you get back to your family. It's late here. But Ray, thank you for making my name important to you. My family loves you for it too."

"Give Fredrik and Cynthia my best wishes and my love, and to you my dear, I truly love you. I almost said it on TV. Good night."

With that Ray slid back in the front door feeling very good about everything. Allie came over to put her arms around him to just hang with him quietly in a very relaxed mood. Then Helen was over with them, and they and everyone else were in the most delightful mood. Ray noticed Eddie and Lisa, and it dawned on him that the glow had to do with something biological they were sharing, that Lisa was, in fact, pregnant. But... he decided not to suggest as much to Helen. He could wait till they chose to announce it.

The malaise set in on Ray right away. As the great baseballer Roger Hornsby is quoted as saying, "People ask me what I do in winter when there's no baseball. I'll tell you what I do. I stare out the window and wait for spring." Well, as little overall involvement as Ray had had in baseball, here he was at the window, waiting for cherry blossoms.

Then seeming to him to be out of the blue, along came the awards announcements for the major league honors. The American League Rookie of the Year was awarded to none other than Ray Bonn, a man now forty-nine. Ray was also awarded the Edgar Martinez Designated Hitter Award, the Lou Gehrig Award, the Hank Aaron Award, and finally the American League Most Valuable Player Award. For these he had to come out of hibernation to make a public statement of appreciation that was much publicized.

Ray said: "I am deeply touched by having been designated to receive these way-too-many awards. It cheers me that a man could receive the Rookie of the Year Award at my age. It gives me a lot to look forward to in the future." He smiled. "The Edgar Martinez Designated Hitter Award is indeed a special

honor for me as well. Having watched Edgar over the years, I hope I can live up to his high standards on and off the field. But it seems a shame to have given that award to someone who almost always swung at a first pitch rather than demonstrating the patience that made Edgar the great hitter that he was throughout his long and distinguished career."

"The Lou Gehrig Award is one that I see as a guideline for how I, or anyone, should like to live life with integrity.

"All those awards are more than I feel that I deserve for my small involvement in the great game of baseball. They are too many, too much; I do not deserve them.

"Short of dishonoring baseball, I have to remonstrate that my receiving the Hank Aaron Award and the American League Most Valuable Player Award in place of Alturis Romero, among whose monumental achievements this year I would be grateful to be listed as a brief footnote, quite frankly embarrasses me. Playing in two games cannot warrant those honors – particularly when there is a player who, in any other year, would have had no challenger to his supremacy."

"Since I am not responsible for the assignment, and it is not a recipient's role to challenge the authority from which they are bestowed, I have no choice but to most humbly accept these awards. I do truly feel honored by each of them. But I do want the world to know that it is my definite opinion that Alturis Romero deserved at least a couple of these instead of me."

Yeah. He should have just said, "Thank you."

#8 Enough Already, Do Something!

It would be hard to assess the damages of winning a World Series, to say nothing of the additional honors that had been heaped upon Ray by major league baseball, as far as his powers of concentration were concerned. It was quite appreciable, with regard to his neglect of his contractual obligation to McGregor Publishing. Lesa too seemed to flounder around for a bit. It seemed, for both, to relate to how Ray could, with one swing of the bat, bring an elusive World Series to Seattle, but in science there are periods of slogging that are not amenable to a sudden leap of insight.

It's true, of course, that Ray's baseball antics were more like the work of a world class surgeon who is called in for special cases, than a medical research epidemiologist. From the time the surgeon gets off at the Helicopter pad, ducking beneath the blades, there are underlings who hand him everything. The surgical gown and mask just magically appear when he needs them, as he struts down the hallway to the operating room, which, when he enters, becomes instantly attuned to his every need. The tools are all laid out like in Hiro's bat case. The patient is already conveniently *out* with the incision having been made. The affected organ is lying there exposed and beating, just waiting for his specific talent to be applied, which he accomplishes in superhero style. He then strolls on out and down the hall with more over-qualified assistants worrying his trivial needs than the patient gets for his survival. Ray had played in two games all year long and the Mariners had slogged the uphill battle to the top just to have Ray put a cherry on it. The metaphors don't all work. Maybe none of them. So what? There must be an assistant somewhere to fix that.

It was Lesa who, although certainly not his assistant, fixed a lot of things in Ray's life through this period, his metaphors, his punctuation, his malaise. Ruth got the rest. After he had left Lesa in Boston, Ray had been the driving force in their collaboration while she got her life straightened out. Then they worked in concert through the summer even though emotionally somewhat estranged. Now it was Lesa once again who had to do the heavy pulling. It was getting hard.

Ray's mind seemed to go off on tangents all the time, not daydreams really, he was thoroughly tired of daydreams that all seemed to happen for him. He seemed to have had a Midas touch. But each seemingly miraculous happening

required more real work in maintaining it as a reality than ultimately it was worth. He guessed that was what being *spoiled* was all about. He was that.

No, his tangents were different now, more in the way of murky thoughts, many of which he had had throughout his life, but for some reason he had never had the time or ambition, or *lack* of ambition, to follow them. In these days since the World Series, when all his time seemed to have been fragmented by well-wishers and media interruptions, the little pieces of time seemed to be encapsulated into these shards of thought like the little concept vignettes of *vintage*, *mutual coherence*, *contemporaneity*, and other related terms. These tidbits often related to the work he and Lesa were doing in thermodynamics in discovering the precise nature of the *arrow of time* and the no-free-lunch zone of irreversible existence of the second law of thermodynamics. Although sometimes they seemed to be quite directly associated, at other times they didn't. It was just a muddle.

It was as though Ray were an archeologist who had unearthed these little ceramic shards with their lovely cameos or partial cameos that seemed in some obscure way to be parts of the same beautiful urn, if only he could see how they all fit together. It was all part of something he would like to be able to say something about, but he couldn't. A disparate set of shards that only very obscurely related to those former ones involved mental aging that all his contemporaries had now to fear.

He discussed with Andrew one day how their friend Russ had once told them that he felt he had to work diligently on his ideas because when he reached sixty his brain would turn to mush. Of course, Russ had been quite a bit older than Ray, although retiring much later in life. Ray related to Andrew how he had reminded Russ, when he had turned sixty that he had, in fact, just turned sixty. Were his thoughts mushy? Russ had just turned to look at Ray, as if to say, "Where on earth did you get such a ridiculous idea?" Maybe Russ had lost it and *could* no longer remember... hmmm. In retrospect and as Andrew had intimated, maybe he just meant, "Why on earth would you make such an ornery and obnoxious comment on a happy occasion of my birthday?" Ray didn't know.

He had never seemed to know what *looks* meant, and he had always wished that people would have just come out and said whatever it was they really meant, so he wasn't left to surmise. Maybe he was a sufferer of Aspergers. He had often thought that he had suffered his entire life from adult attention deficit disorder. The symptoms seemed to have characterized his entire life. Edna would have just attributed it all to a passive aggressive disorder. What did Andrew think?

Andrew didn't know, it wasn't his field. But he didn't think so.

Helen's continuing involvement in politics was heating up. There would be a presidential election next year, and ever since Election 2000 Helen cared even more deeply about the erosion of democracy in America than she had in all her previous years of political activism.

She had cared even when they were growing up. Her arguments with Ray's father had centered on that very issue. The fact that she was now wife to the MVP of a World Series made her vulnerable to exploitation by candidates and campaign workers who became aware of any compatible opinions for which he might say a kind word or provide an endorsement. Perhaps there was some hope that not only could they use Helen, but that she might entice her celebrity husband to give additional visibility for some cause or candidate.

Ray did not disagree with Helen's politics in any substantive way. He never had, but he was selfish with his time. It wasn't as though he didn't have as much time as anyone else, or that Helen's causes didn't seem worthy of his or anyone else's time, it was that he, Ray Bonn, only had fragmented time. Everything he did fragmented it further. It was like dropping a vase and then walking on the pieces as one tries to pick them up. One had to step back in such situations. China closets were bad places for bulls or people with fragmented time... or sufferers of Aspergers.

Ray had already been solicited to speak at a rally for one of Helen's favorite candidates. He had refused with her expressing some irritation with his unwillingness to help a good cause.

"For God's sake, Ray, you just sit there with your eyes rolled back like Hector," she said.

He liked the allusion at least, but she didn't think his getting sidetracked on the quality of the allusion was very empathetic either. It wasn't, of course. It missed the point, Helen or no Helen of Troy.

"You need to get out and *do* something," she told him.

Why was it that whenever a person is stuck in a quandary of not knowing what *to* do, they are advised to just *do* something. *Anything*. Why not just *think* about *what* to do? That seemed like better advice to Ray. Or do it more subtly like Friedrich Nietzsche's favorite gambit of the dot dot dot... after which one gets a minor "Ah ha!" experience, an epiphany perhaps, concerning what the hell one might *appropriately* do. Why this push to *do* without knowing what in the hell *to* do? That could get one in a lot of trouble, it seemed to Ray.

Then Edna called.

Helen answered, of course, and gave the phone to Ray quickly after the perfunctory niceties.

He was in trouble.

"Hi, Edna," Ray said, "It's been a long time."

"It has been," she said. "How are you coming?"

"Nothing about how great I was in the World Series first, all the honors I garnered, nothing?"

"I was saving that until later so we could end on a high note. Ruth tells me you and Lesa are floundering. That is the term she used."

"It sounds like the right word to me. Ruth knows her words."

"Then we need to get something moving. I'll arrange a little holiday for you two where you can work together for a few days. It'll be sort of like our time at the Sheltry. You and Lesa were very productive then."

"Yeah, that was great, Edna. But it's different now. Anyway, I know it isn't Lesa, it's just me. I don't produce as well when I have all these irons in the fire, but I should be done with that now. Let's give it some time. What kind of deadline are you thinking of? I think we could have it pretty well ready to print by the end of the year."

"Ray." Edna paused. "You're faster than that when you're on your toes. If we get you and Lesa back in a suite, she'll get you on tip toes."

Ray could tell that Edna had herself almost in stitches. "Edna, I've been walking on tip toes ever since the Sheltry experience. I feel more like a choreographed ballet dancer than a human being."

"Your pirouettes need choreographing. Lesa does a good job of it."

"Yeah, I know she does. I'm her star pupil. However, that isn't going to happen. We'll get that book to you by the end of the year. Lesa and I have other things we have to do in the meantime. There are a bunch of conferences coming up next year, and journals where physics gets done to which we need to contribute right away in order to get our work included. That scientific presentation circuit will start for us right after the first of the year. I think it's important. We're not just writing a best-selling novel here, Edna. Lesa and I are attempting to shock the scientific community with our discovery. That will end up helping you with sales. Doing it the other way around won't work as well."

"Well, you're making sense anyway, Ray. Lesa told me pretty much the same story last time I talked to her except that she'd like to shack up with you again."

"That's an ugly turn of phrase, Edna, and not nearly as expressive of realities as you might think."

"I know, I know," she said. "It's not what Lesa said either. But will you come on a book tour when it gets out there? Europe is waiting. It's not like we don't need you to help promote your own books."

"Contrary to some popular belief systems, I do like to be needed."

"Well, Ray, you do seem to come through when you're needed, don't you? You were great in the World Series."

"So, is that the high note we end on then?"

"It is. Thanks, Ray. Bye."

Boom. She was outta there... gone... beamed up. The usual one hundred percent efficient Carnot cycle engine, Edna Robinson.

So... that was his wake-up call.

He looked over at Helen in her corner of the office, sitting at her computer, looking at him with a smug grin.

"I guess it's time to go to work," he said.

Helen smiled mischievously, "You mean it's pin the tail on Eeyore time?" Then she conspicuously got back to whatever it was she was banging away at on her keyboard but laughing all the same.

Ray looked a little confused. "I'm going to call Lesa," he said. "We have to get these technical papers into the works."

"Use your cell phone and get out of here, so I can concentrate. I have to get these meetings lined up."

He knew that Helen was not bothered by his phone calls at all and that she wanted to overhear enough to be able to manage his life for him. However, he also knew, that she knew he needed a little privacy with Lesa to get him titillated enough to get off his proverbial duff after having moped for long enough.

On "tip toes" as Edna had said.

Knowing Helen knew all of that was somewhat disconcerting to Ray once again, but he was used to knowing she knew everything about him. He pretended not to again and went in the other room to get his jacket where he kept his cell phone. He slipped it on while he was at it, going out into the yard by one of the ponds in the slow fall drizzle, and clicked Lesa's number.

"Hi," she said, having recognized him on caller ID. "It's been too long, Ray."

"Ever since you quit answering my calls six or eight months ago."

"Six, Ray. Six. And you know why too."

"I do, Lesa, and I don't blame you at all. It was unkind."

"Did she tell you what I said?"

"Yeah. But can we get on to what Edna said?"

"Sure. But first, Ray, I told Helen the truth. I always tell the truth."

"Me too," he said. He was suddenly very tired and very sorry he had tried being cute on the topic of phone calls.

"Did Edna tell you I wanted to get holed up with you again?"

"No. She said, *she* wanted me to get holed up with *you* again to get me off my duff. But I'm off my duff... as of Edna's phone call. I've had a hard time concentrating, and it just hasn't seemed to get any better, but Edna is enough of an enforcer to give me the life crisis experience I need for a lifestyle change." They shared a laugh.

"You know Edna can't figure out why you're so scared to death of her," Lesa said and laughed some more.

"Did you tell her?"

"I don't know either. It must be just a personality you find hard to deal with I guess, huh?"

"That must be it all right, but I thought maybe you knew and would enlighten me. When we were all together, it was great. She didn't intimidate me at all... as long as you were there too... and on my side eating corned beef hash. Isn't it strange how those dynamics worked?"

"Well, you weren't afraid of her back then only because I terrified you even more – into those 'Oh, God,' ejaculations. Remember?" She laughed at him

now, remembering those good old times when they had last been together. And she liked her questionable phrasing.

"We did have some fun in spite of you terrorizing me, didn't we?"

"Yep, we did." She paused, "So what's this call really about, Ray? We're getting back to work hard and heavy, I assume."

"I need to," Ray said. "Alzheimer's is just around the next corner so I have to get to work to forestall it."

"Ray, don't say that. I mean it. Don't say it. Ever. Anyway..." and she paused. "It's my fault too. I've been feeling sorry for myself. I think I'm driving the old folks Sorensens insane with my moping. They'll be glad to have me cheered up and invigorated. Hearing from you does that, Ray, so thanks, from me... *and* them. I have lined up a bunch of conferences that we need to submit papers to, and we have invites to write articles for a couple of journals besides. We should saturate them right off, Ray. And then maybe next winter you can be in Stockholm."

"Here's to Scandinavia in winter," Ray said. "You'll send me that schedule then? Do you have a brief of which of our concepts you think fit best in each of the conferences? Oh, and have you indicated which of the calls for papers require a draft of a completed paper and which just need abstracts pending acceptance?"

"Yeah, I have all that piled around here somewhere. I will get it all together in a single file we can work off of. I know there's a paper required for the Helsinki conference in early March. It seems to me that the photon escape mechanism should maybe get out there in that conference. What do you think? That would shock the world, huh? Somebody important from Stockholm is sure to be there." She laughed deviously. "That's your baby, Ray. That's your paper. You do it yourself."

"Lesá, we have our collaboration arrangements all made. I don't want to do anything by myself; you're an integral part of everything we've put together. I know that you have some papers that need to get out that you wrote before we started our collaboration. I think you should publish them now under just your new name so we can get them out there. It all helps us. Everything else is both of us.

"Ray, I'm with you. I may not have a pink nipple on your shoulder right this minute as I'd like to, but that's how close I am to you. I am never going to publish anything if you are not co-author on it. Okay?"

"Can I just say 'Me too' again like I always do. We'll just be Rogers and Hammerstein then. And please don't say the other. It makes me nervous."

"Bonn and Sorensen 'now and forever', no other and no pastel pink."

"It's got a ring to it, Lesá," and then, "Okay, I'll get writing on the Helsinki paper and get it to you in a few days. It's about the thermodynamics of two particles, right?"

"What?" She seemed confused.

"Entropy, no free lunch, and times arrow don't just apply when there are Avogadro's particles involved. Our whole schtick is that all those

thermodynamic terms apply when as few as two particles interact. Remember that diagram you drew for me when we were in the Shetry? That's essentially the basis of all there is to say about the second law of thermodynamics. Right? Isn't that what your diagram meant?"

"Yes, I see. But that is just a depiction of your combining of Einstein's relativistic Doppler and photo electric effects that he failed to conjoin."

"Well, I guess those two diagrams belong in the paper then. Right? What else do we have to get done right away?"

"I think you need to put in your diagram of the photo electric constraint in the presence of relative motion."

"Yeah, okay. But you know, in thinking about thermodynamics in the small – and I think we need to promote the value of doing just that – it's just thermodynamics without closing the loops we identified in the diagram of Einstein's demonstration of the origin of blackbody radiation."

"How do you mean exactly?"

"Well, let's say we just have a swarm of particles – like bees – whose random velocities are determined by temperature; the swarming molecules emit and absorb radiation with their initial proximity making it likely that the radiation emitted by a member of the swarm will be absorbed by another. But this can only occur for emission/absorption particle pairs that are approaching. Do you follow me?"

"Everywhere, always Ray." She laughed happily. "As a consequence, the swarm disbands, gets more and more dispersed. All further emissions of radiation escape beyond the swarm. Isn't that where you're going with this?"

"Yeah. Exactly. Gravity and hydrostatic pressure could hold it together, but that's another topic. We demonstrate the significance of the absorption constraints and loop closures. So that's what goes into the Helsinki paper?"

"That will make a great paper Ray. There are two or three abstracts due before long. I'll whip them up and get them to you. I should be able to make a pass at them today. After you do the touch up, I'll mail them out by the end of the week. Your paper is probably the most important thing we have to put a concentrated effort on right away. I think there's another complete paper draft we'll have to get out, but it's not due for a month or so. If I get time, I might put some effort into that, but I'll probably just hop back into the *Origins*. You told Edna the first of the year on that then?"

"Yeah, although I think I said, 'year-end'."

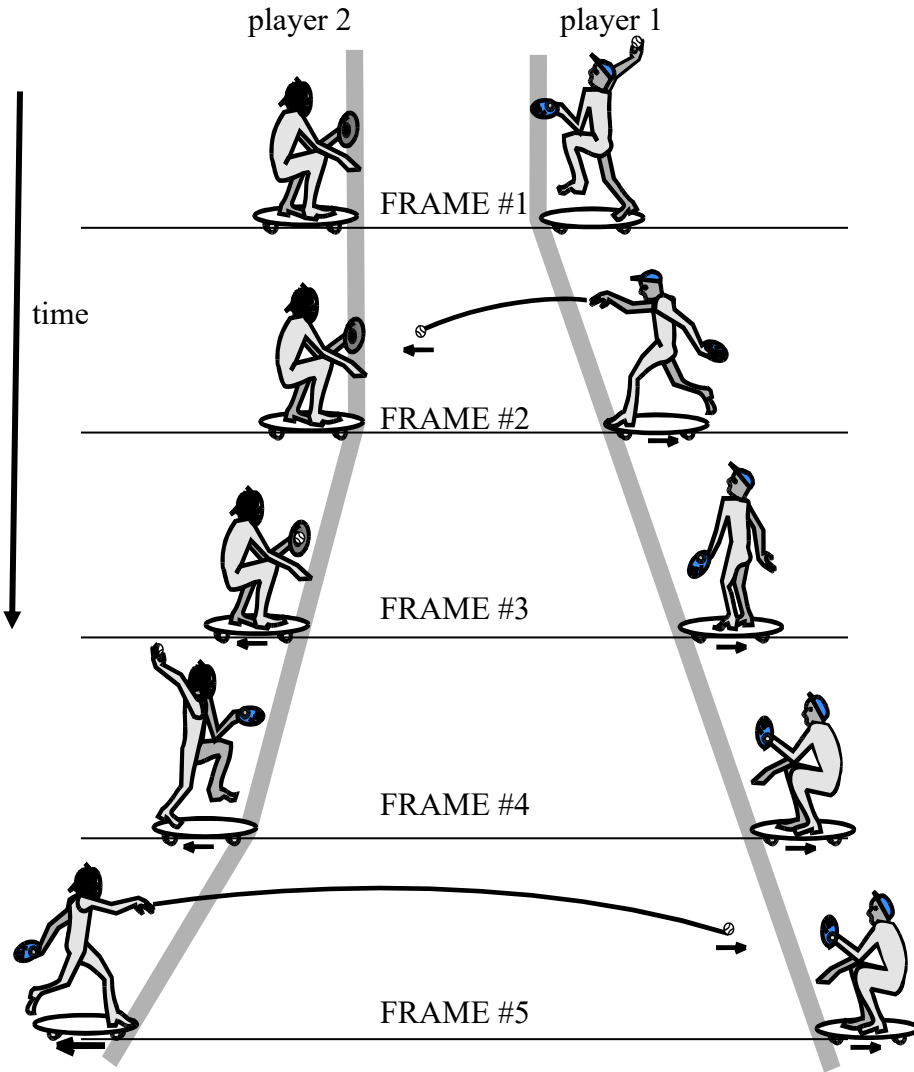
"Year-end then. I see Edna's been trying to get a hold of me too while we talked, so I'll confirm the date." The pause, "Ray, it has been so wonderful talking to you again. I have missed you so much and sharing our mutual understanding of the way things work. I will *never* refuse to answer a call from your cell again the rest of my life. I promise. I love you."

"I love you too my irreversible thermodynamic collaborator."

They laughed happily as they signed off.

Lesa got the agenda together for their joint participation in mainstream scientific life that Ray had not previously attempted in the field of physics,

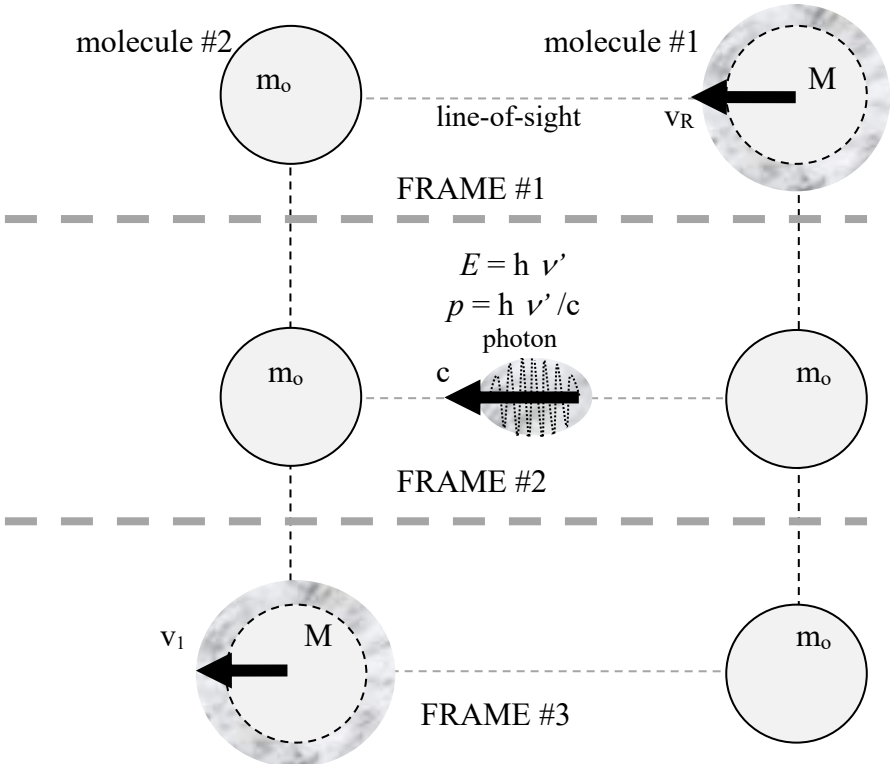
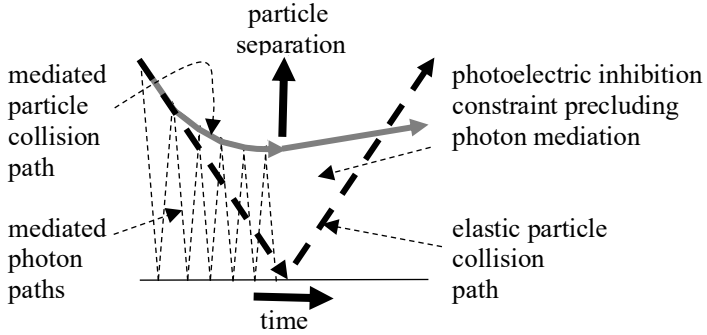
although he had published many papers in his field of engineering. He could probably not break into a new field without Lesa as his sidekick. In many ways he was the sidekick she was carrying along. But their attempts worked almost without exception. None of their papers were rejected. Probably some of them were illegitimately accepted just because they had name recognition through media coverage of their various antics. But they had, among those abstracts and papers they were sending out, some real scientific jewels that would become seminal papers in the field to be cited for years to come.



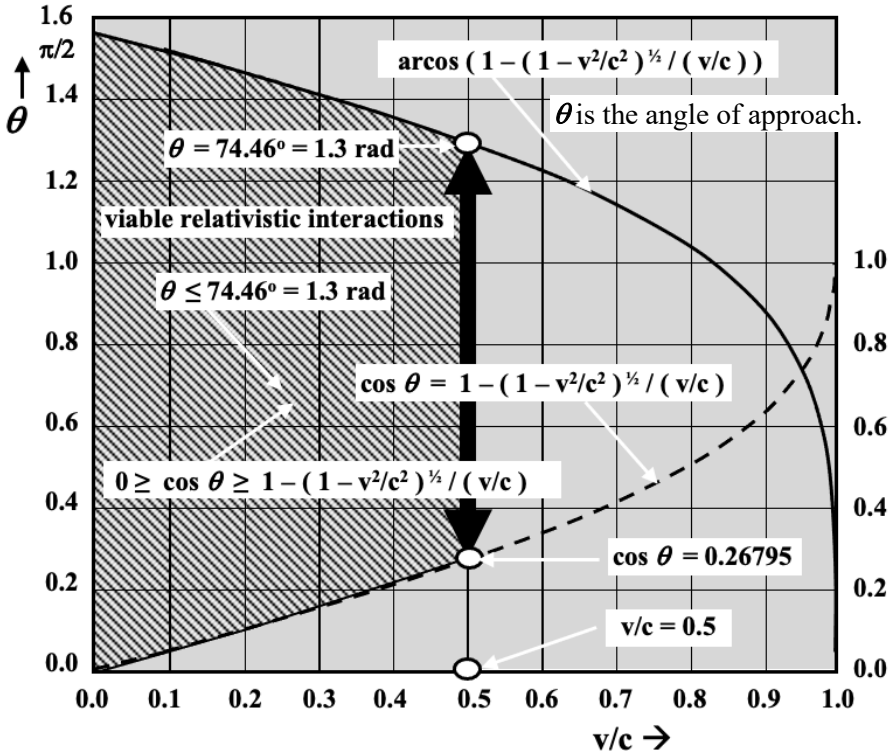
The dynamics of a 'catch' sequence on skateboards

Their book on *Origins of Irreversibility* did in fact get to McGregor Publishing by year's end although the title would be altered somewhat. It

would not reach the pinnacle of commercial success that Ray's first book had, but both the authors would be delighted with its success, nonetheless. Whereas the *Aberrations of Relativity* had sold many more copies, it had not been as well accepted by the scientific community. That was partly because it had pitted itself *against* establishment, pointing out problems with the modes of operation, interpretations, pretensions, and results of scientific practitioners and unquestioned devotion to favorite theories and dogma. Furthermore, although it had provided alternative conjectures, none of these seemed likely to be testable in the foreseeable future to ultimately win the day as far as replacing what was now on its account accepted as being flawed.



'Spontaneous' emission with line-of-sight approaching relative motion



Domain of allowed molecular interactions in relativistic quantum physics

There had been a continuing uneasiness produced in the scientific community that kept Ray's effort from being heralded by those who mattered in such endeavors. But with their work on entropy the reaction was the direct opposite. The book proved too logically complex for most laymen to master, which precluded commercial success. Even though there weren't an awful lot of equations contained therein, the concepts themselves were more difficult than the algebraic concepts of the former.

Their conclusions would be acclaimed by virtually all who worked in the field of Thermodynamics. Sales of the book wouldn't trail off as they had on Ray's other book and would actually continue to increase as its scientific merit became ever more obvious. It would become a classic text of thermodynamics courses at universities for years to come.

Although either Ray or Lesa would have been welcomed on talk shows for other reasons, the promotion of their collaboration was not of any great interest to laymen who figured their own personal knowledge of aging and there being no free lunch was already adequate for their mundane purposes. It's origins and why it occurred mattered less to the average person than unreliable claims for products to circumvent its effects.

After the presentation that Lesa made of their seminal paper in Helsinki, their work had become, almost by definition, 'good science' whenever

thermodynamic issues were involved. At scientific conferences wherever irreversibility or entropy was the topic or even of tangential interest, their collaboration on a scientific paper and its presentation were in demand. The crowds in attendance at these presentations were always large. Lesa was at Ray to attend these with her and make at least some of the presentations, but he insisted that it be she who made them... she, alone; she was good at it.

He had vehemently refused to attend any of these conferences. That was until finally there was perhaps the most significant of the conference on major thermodynamic issues being held at a new elaborate convention facility on the Oregon coast later in the summer. It would be a comfortable five- or six-hour drive from the Seattle area. Lesa and Helen contrived to convince Ray that since he had been invited to make the keynote address it would be rude of him not to graciously accept. He could then also witness one of the so highly acclaimed presentations that Lesa had been making of all their technical papers under their joint authorship.

He would indeed like to see her in action sometime. He was not at all sure that she had not used her now considerable connections to have the invitation given to him rather than her in order to get him there. That would probably have been easy enough for her since she knew all the principals involved. He would have much preferred to be a mouse peeking out of a hole than there in person since, as he warned Helen, "When Lesa and I get together you can never be sure what she might try to pull off."

Helen laughed and said, "Ray, the efficiency of Lesa's purring engine doesn't have a chance against your fabulous brakes, and you seem to have had them readjusted. You haven't seen Lesa in over a year, and for two people who work together as closely as the two of you have, that's just plain weird! Anyway, she has probably got a boyfriend by now. She's young; biological clocks tick loudly at that age."

"Especially hers," Ray thought and he really didn't like thinking of Lesa having a boyfriend in attendance, nor allusions to his being an inertial obstacle rather than a positive force, but facts were facts, even if unflattering, he guessed. Reference to Lesa's "biological clock" seemed just plain tacky to say the least after the last fiasco Helen had caused by such reference.

In any case Ray finally accepted the prestigious appointment.

But baseball never went away. There had even been demands in February for Ray to appear at the Mariners Spring Training Camp in Peoria, Arizona that year. He had summarily refused without giving the ridiculous suggestion another thought or response. But as soon as the season started there had been pleas and virtual threats that Ray Bonn should get his lazy ass in uniform to help the Mariners who were not starting the year out a lot better than last year.

Well, that boded well for them he told Lesa as a message to relay to Mariners management.

The World Series rings were going to be given to the players during an infield ceremony at SAFECO Field in mid-May. The Mariners wondered

whether, since Ray would be there anyway, he would mind suiting up and going to bat if an occasion arose for which Hiro's bat in his hands might make a difference. Lesa and he discussed this at some length before Ray decided to go ahead with an anniversary type appearance that might once again spur the Mariners on. So, on a Saturday in May right after the Kentucky Derby, Ray Bonn was once more on the Mariners bench in uniform.

Before the game there was an awards presentation of rings to all the Mariners still on the team from the previous year. The Commissioner of Baseball was on hand to make one more award to Ray Bonn. Bud Heidegger indicated that because of his achievements last season, and in part because of his remonstrances upon being selected to receive awards that were the closest that baseball could come to honoring the significance of his achievements, a new award had been defined. It was the Ray Bonn Spectacular Event Award to be awarded when some record setting accomplishment had occurred in either league. Ray Bonn would be its first recipient for what he had done on a single day one year ago. Thus, Ray took home more hardware, or rather Helen sat with some more hardware in her lap, or it sat in the lap of one of their offspring, their spouses, or his grandchildren throughout the game, until Ray was allowed to go home.

It was an exciting game. It looked like the Mariners might lose yet another home game until in the ninth with the score five to two, the bases got loaded, and Mac came over to Ray and said, "It's time to use the Mariners WMD."

All the boring details of the preparation that had come to embarrass Ray were in place, and the fans loved all that rigmarole. Ray stepped up to the plate. The first pitch about took Ray's head off. If he hadn't jerked his head back, he thought, they might have had to remove the ball from his ear hole surgically. The pitcher seemed to panic then, because the next pitch was right down the middle such that any decent hitter would have planted it in the seats as Ray did.

As his ninth grand slam in a row, it augured well for his chances at the Ray Bonn Spectacular Event Award for another year. Ray was sick of his Midas touch. Why did he do it, he wondered. He almost wished that first pitch had hit him so everyone would know he was human. He could have done the three-lame-swings scenario and instantly drifted off into one of the obscure footnotes of baseball history, or not given a full swing for Christ's sake. But Ray Bonn had his pride. That probably just about summed up Ray Bonn, he thought. It was instinct when a ball came at him, like a frog and a fly.

It wasn't too long after that appearance at SAFECO field that Ray first noticed Helen wasn't feeling well... not just once or even occasionally, but it became a regular thing. Ray insisted that she set up an appointment with her doctor, but she resisted for a few weeks, and seemed to him to actually be feeling better.

She was cheerier and seemed to be more into the political races that were heating up as the summer came along. A few days before Ray would be going

down for the conference on the Oregon coast, Helen announced that she had gotten an appointment for a checkup that would occur the week he got back from the conference.

Ray was pleased. "Oh good," he said, "but aren't you feeling pretty well now?"

"Yes, I am," she said, "But you wanted me to go, so I'm going." She smiled submissively.

"You make me feel like a prime mover instead of the little guy who's always being dragged around by the nose."

"Well, you can feel that way if you like, but only because I don't object."

Her cliché was a part of their usual banter that Ray didn't really like. It made him feel like a retarded son living with an aging mother.

#9 Together Again

The dates finally arrived for the Conference on the coast. Ray was scheduled to pick Lesa up at the airport in Portland on the day before the conference actually convened. Everyone involved knew that there would be ample rides to share from the Portland airport to the coast. But Lesa and Ray knew that since they had not seen each other in well over a year now, nothing was going to take that extra few encapsulated hours alone together away from them.

She could have flown directly into SeaTac International and ridden down with Ray with much less hassle. But that didn't address the personal trauma of Lesa probably having to meet everyone in Ray's family. Everyone witnessing how Lesa and Ray interacted after fourteen months of separation was not what either of them wanted. It would certainly highlight questions concerning their traveling together, to say nothing of sleeping at the same convention center. So, no, Portland would be handy even at twice the difficulty.

To say that their reunion was a happy occasion would definitely have understated that situation. But at the same time, they were awkward around each other, especially in the crowd at the airport. They were still celebrities and their glasses had become increasingly ineffective, particularly with them together again. As Lesa came out of the airport from baggage claim to hop into Ray's car as they had prearranged, she was recognized. Even with her new hair style that Ray had not seen before.

Several enthusiasts followed her to Ray's car, and upon seeing him as he threw her bags into the trunk, were onto him with old pulp paperbacks and scratch pads to be signed. He hopped back in the car with a couple people trying the doors. He almost hit someone as he drove off and then narrowly missed a car that swerved and honked as he careened out into the circling traffic. Lesa was laughing nervously as Ray tore out of the airport strip and finally sped onto highway 205 heading south.

"Shouldn't we be heading west?" Lesa asked.

Ray was rattled. "I've been here before you know."

"I'm guessing that may have been back before you were famous."

Then and only then did they relax into who they were and laugh happily. She unhooked her seatbelt and leaned over to kiss Ray warmly.

"You about killed that guy back at the airport you know."



Lesa's new hair style

"That might have felt all right, don't you think." Then after a pause, "God, it's good to be back with you again, Lesa. I like your hair."

"Isn't it? Do you know it's been way over a year? And the only time I ever see you, you're swinging a bat or accepting some award or other. And that isn't the essential Ray Bonn. You always liked my hair, didn't you."

"Yeah, I loved your hair back then too and nope on baseball. This is me, running down pedestrians and driving the wrong way on freeways."

Gradually they calmed down and got into a rhythm a little more like each remembered the good times at the Sheltry. The hours of travel to the convention center melted into the background of the separation and depravity of their everyday lives, leaving them finally at their destination wishing that their encapsulation, even in a car but heading somewhere together, could have gone on forever.

Lesa was different though, Ray noticed. She was a much more mature person, he thought. The charm was still all there, but some of the naiveté had disappeared over the interval of their separation. It was as though Fredrik and

Cynthia had had their effect, and the effect was to ennoble without destroying what had already been there. She was indeed a lady.

However, the conference Ray found to his disappointment, was one of those that are more of an informal scientific community reunion than a scientific tableau. Time-honored fields of scientific investigation that have been studied and re-studied without a tremendous amount of progress accumulate a body of professors and researchers whose jaded approach to science has few opportunities for excitement. Their main conference every year becomes a gala occasion for them. They revel in the subtle but miniscule achievements of peers and applaud papers with virtually no new substance whatsoever: A new experiment to reveal the same facts, a revised formulation, or a measurement to another decimal point pertinent to further validation of an ancient theory, etc. Newcomers are oddities, to be inspected perhaps but not really integrated into the festivities, and Ray, although supposedly the honored keynote speaker, was definitely one of these oddities. He didn't belong here.

Lesa, on the other hand, was one of *them*. She had been attending this conference since her days at Harvard. It was at this conference, although at a different location, that her emergence as a possible biggie in the field was first noted. She received the best paper award that first year, and now twice since, if one included the shared honor with Ray.

But whether at a scientific gathering or a random crowd at a stoplight Ray Bonn in the midst of that crowd was a major league star first and foremost, there to sign baseballs, napkins, envelopes, arms, baseballs, baseball cards, or books, but not as an intellectual force to be reckoned with. It irritated him no end. The only difference in any such crowd behavior was that at this scientific gathering there was a reversed sense of who was important. The mere fact that he could hit a baseball meant to most of those present that he could *not* solve a differential equation. It was that simple.

He would have liked to explain to these ignoramus sometimes that the neurons between his eyes and cortex could solve more complex Lie Group differential equations than they could even program their computers to solve as a five-year project. He solved them faster in real time than their computers could, even if they had ultimately been able to formulate the complex algorithms and debug the programs so as to even allow them to be executed on their computers. What did they think was involved in hitting a baseball anyway? It was the real time solution of differential equations.

For some reason the geek men had the hardest time accepting Ray whereas the women did not seem to have an analogy to the alpha male hurdle. They were interested in him not just as 'the slugger', although that did loom large, but that seemed to have no negative connotations for them. They could cut through the image to the scientist as well. Thus, it was that Professor Margot Mueller from the University of Virginia seemed to hang around wherever Ray was, which he actually appreciated since there were a few others who also hung around wherever *she* was. That resulted in his not being left standing alone to

be jealous of the most brilliant young and old male physicists who always followed Lesa wherever she went like a bunch of tom cats chasing a queen.

Although Lesa made a point of saving a spot beside her in the conference rooms where they listened to the presentations and at the various dinners, her following was always present. It was as though Ray were completely invisible, as though he were her butler, her chauffeur, a mascot oddity, or whatever, but definitely nothing of interest to them.

Ray had put considerable thought into his keynote address to which he gave the title, *The Stairway to Truth*. Before he began, he had a projection of Janus, the god of endings and beginnings on the screen behind him, in reference to a quote from Bruno Latour's book *Science in Action*. In retrospect his title was presumptuous and what appeared to be an aged satyr and young nymph in the image he had selected of the two faces of Janus was totally ill conceived. He had failed to see, but others might, that the image was in some way related to his and Lesa's coauthorship arrangement. This dawned on him only after the projection was already on the screen and then he had had to continue with his address as they were up there in mockery over his shoulder. But he had gone on with it; Lesa told him he had excelled, and several others had complimented him on the address later. Still... this is what he said:

"Let me begin by quoting Bruno Latour: "... *the status of a statement depends on later statements.*"¹

"Having the faith to doubt anything and everything is the prerequisite of scientific knowledge. There is no exception for well-established statements of the laws of physics because they are based on limitations current at the time the statements were formulated. Scientific statements established subsequent to the original formulation of these laws sometimes cast doubt on the scientific statements on which the former formulations were based. The perceived audacity of doubting established laws is not welcomed by nominal lovers of science, for whom science is the construction of facts as a fixed stairway to truth. But scientific facts are *not* rigid steps in a staircase; each step wobbles on conditionals which seem to be valid at the time of their construction. The status of these conditionals, axioms even, change over time – not specifically as functions of time, but as having been modified by a clarified understanding of scientific statements that were not known at the time. Thus, in addition to dealing with new scientific statements encapsulating experimental and theoretical discoveries, science must also address modifications of past assumptions that necessitate reformulation of previous scientific statements. So scientific discovery must proceed backward as well as forward in time and looking backward will always be a thankless task – the two faces of Janus as discussed by Bruno Latour.

¹ Bruno Latour, *Science in Action*, Harvard University Press Cambridge. Massachusetts 1987 -- *bottom of page 27*.



<https://www.faranakmirjalili.net/articles/2019/1/1/janus-god-of-endings-and-beginnings>

“The term ‘faith’ is generally perceived in a religious sense of a committed statement with regard to affirming existence of a supernatural explanation where there is a lack, or insufficiency of an explanation of natural phenomena. Whereas the scientific faith to doubt legitimacy is an affirmation that a current lack or insufficiency of explanation of natural phenomena will eventually be replaced by an adequate rational explanation. Missing or vapid statements among solidly scientific statements are anathema to a scientific mind. These lacunae can and must be doubted to be rectified. This is a faith that insists that there must be a reason for everything rather than the kind of faith that allows that phenomena may occur for no reason at all or by supernatural edict.

“The generally accepted concept of scientific faith has traditionally been forward looking in the sense of anticipating new discoveries based on new experiments, observations, and theoretical techniques that, although yet unknown, will eventually be discovered. But there is another essential aspect of scientific faith that allows one to doubt heralded scientific achievements of the past. These two beatific attitudes are equally scientific even if the latter is less appreciated.

“We are gathered at this conference as a part of a greater scientific mission to establish scientific facts that may become common knowledge, hoping they will ultimately come to warrant recognition as truth itself. No one of us can accomplish that feat by his or herself. Collectively, other statements than ours, made in the past, here now, and in the future will solidify the place of statements made over the next few days. It is an honor to be a part of that.”

Mercifully it was over. He should not have come. There was some applause, but certainly not the applause of Yankee Stadium.

The highlight of the conference, of course, was Lesa's presentation of their jointly authored paper. He wouldn't have missed that for anything. When she was done, he applauded right along with everyone else. The fact that there was deep and meaningful content to their paper merely made it worthy of her eloquence. She definitely had flair.

When the meetings were over in the afternoons, she would virtually be swept away by the men crowding in to get around her. Ray was unwilling to compete for her time or attention in such crowds. For that reason and for that reason alone, he was typically off away from these eddies of enthusiasts, either by himself, or with Margot and her much smaller crowd.

Margot actually seemed interested in Ray's and Lesa's work. She seemed convinced that they had indeed found "the Rosetta Stone of thermodynamics," which was the phrase that she had coined for use in her paper in reference to their work. Her research involved adiabatic expansions that Ray and Lesa had considered of some interest in certain aspects of their own investigations into thermalization and had therefore referenced her work in their paper as well. That was, of course, typical of scientific protocol of You're-Ok-I'm-Ok reciprocity characteristic of researchers in every field.

On this the last night of the conference there was a marshmallow roast out on the beach and everyone was in casual clothes, although most of the Ivy leaguers seemed above actually wearing jeans or looking relaxed as against 'cool', Ray noted.

Ray had sat on a log well away from the fire. Margot had found a spot right next to him, actually bringing him a golden roasted marshmallow when she had come over. Lesa and her entourage came by in a little while, Lesa making a point of asking Ray if he wanted to go wading. Lesa was already carrying her shoes. When he declined, she asked him if he would hold her shoes for her, as a sign he supposed, of her ownership of him – or even possibly the other way around.

He said, "No, you'll need them when you're done; I think I'll go on up to my room." Ray noticed one of the young 'bucks' (a term he could not get out of his mind along with 'toms') in particular, a Lawrence Huntington, Ph.D. youngest physics professor at Harvard who, Ray had to admit, had made quite an impressive presentation at this conference. Although clearly outdistanced, it had been the closest competitor for the best paper award, and Ray noted that these people took that competition very seriously. Lesa's friend Brian, whose

recent thermodynamics text bored Ray, hung around too, but he didn't have Lawrence's class either personally or professionally.

Lawrence was all over Lesa and she teased him in turn. Just now they ran off happily, finally running into the surf, Lesa ahead of him with Brian following further back. Lesa's skirt was wet and clinging to her legs after having been hit by a wave that was almost up to her waist.

Ray got up then and began walking toward the motel with Margot seeming to be in tow. She chatted with him dismissing first one of her pursuers and then another until it was just Margot and Ray who walked into the lobby of the hotel. Ray stepped onto the elevator and she followed. He pressed the button for his floor. She watched.

"Would you like to come up to my flat for a drink; I have a nice scotch. It should be a nice sunset tonight," she said.

"No, I think I'll just go to my room and look over some stuff," he responded.

It was somewhat to Ray's dismay, that she did not push any button at all. He knew her room was not on his and Lesa's floor. Then she followed him when he got out and thence all the way to his room. Once he got there, he took his room key out and stood chatting idly for a bit waiting for her to leave. She became quite bold finally, saying suggestively, "I'd like to be some of the 'stuff' you look over tonight, would that work for you?"

"I'm really sorry, Margot, but I'm just not a fun kinda guy tonight. It's been wonderful talking with you though. I hope you will send me that list of papers we discussed. Good night." He opened the door and went in leaving her standing there alone.

Once inside with the door having clicked shut, he sighed deeply and pondered his rudeness, leaning his back against the door. There had to have been a better way. He walked to the glass sliding door finally, opening it to experience curtains swirling in his face. He stepped through them onto the small verandah that looked out across the Pacific.

Lesla's apartment was behind Ray's. She didn't have a private verandah. Her apartment was situated so as to be either a separate room or as a part of a larger suite that would have included Ray's more extensive accommodations. They had not bothered to combine the rooms – or perhaps they had bothered *not* to, he didn't know which. As Ray looked out across the vast Pacific, he knew that she had purposely set up their rooms this way, thinking that they could both share this view. So far, however, there had been no sense in which the rooms were not completely separate. In addition to its separate entry from the hallway and completely separate room number associated with her accommodation, there was a door that locked both ways between. Lesa had insisted (well, in fact she had made the arrangements) that he have the more luxurious of the accommodations. She had probably envisioned it as a surrogate Sheltry suite, but he was sure that he had not lived up to the memory she had of the guy she had shared accommodations with in the Big Apple so long ago – back when she had dreamed of sharing so much more. She probably

had noticed the changes in him just as he had in her, his aging in particular. She had matured; he had just aged. No doubt she would have wondered these last few days what all her fascination had been about. Probably in retrospect she was beginning to understand the father image aspect of which he had tried so hard to persuade her back then.

While he stood there several of the younger attendees at the conference were still frolicking in the surf out in front of the motel as he watched. He saw Lesa the furthest out laughing and splashing back at the young men who were pursuing her, trying to get her wet. She seemed to have looked up toward Ray for a moment and waved, and by diverting her attention had gotten splashed, and then she was violently splashing back. Maybe they thought this was a wet T-shirt contest, he thought. Maybe she did too. Maybe it was. If so, she was the only contestant of note and she would have won no matter how many there had been.

Would she end up with one of these obnoxious characters as a husband, he wondered. She probably would. With Lawrence and his irritating arrogance, he guessed. He thought, well, they'll have smart kids anyway. Turning back into the room, he threw off his jacket, top shirt, shoes, and socks. It was warm. He sat down in the large round papasan chair then in his T-shirt and jeans, looking out at the horizon well above where he could hear Lesa and her eager boys playing.

The chair was a huge nearly horizontal hoop of bamboo with a wicker or rattan cone seat filled with overstuffed pillows, all tied to the large circle so as to fit. He had set it squarely in the center of this main room of his suite and had used it whenever he was in the room. It was a very comfortable place to lay back and view the distant horizon to where an increasingly reddened sun was now dropping steadily. It occurred to Ray that this might just be an occasion to see the illusive 'green dot' at sunset. That was something to look forward to.

Pretty soon he heard some laughter and scuffling in the hallway. Then there was a thud and someone falling. Lesa's voice rang out, "You touch me like that again you bastard and I'll break your neck!" Then came the slam of the outside door into her apartment, followed by complete silence. Finally, he thought he heard her shower running.

Lying back thinking that in the morning he would be taking Lesa to the airport in Portland, he was filled with a deep sadness, knowing that then he would drive back home to Seattle alone. That he would never attend another scientific conference, he had decided that a couple of days earlier. This day had solidified that decision. He hated the snobbery of the meetings and luncheons. But most of all, he admitted to himself, he hated watching the men sniff at Lesa like tomcats. It was breaking his heart. She needed one of these men no doubt... well, hopefully a nobler one than he had seen here at this conference... but he didn't want to watch her selection process. It truly was *her* business. This human mating ritual was too ugly a process to watch.

While he yet ruminated on these and even more melancholy thoughts there was a knock at the door. He started to get up before he realized that it was the door between Lesa's and his apartments. He sat back again noiselessly pretending not to be there at all.

He had not checked that door in the several days they had been here, and he felt quite sure that it must be locked. But then he heard a voice... her voice. He remembered that when they had first arrived Lesa had checked both units. She had checked... well, evidently *unlocked*... that door. Clearly, he should have checked it himself.

"Are you alone?" It was Lesa behind him now.

"Apparently not anymore," he said in a jaded voice as he heard the door click shut again.

"I thought you and Margot might be up here. I saw her walk to the motel with you. What happened?"

"Oh, she caught me touching her where I shouldn't have, so she slugged me in the face and told me that if I ever tried that again, she would break my neck."

"The bitch!" Lesa said, laughing easily, knowing now that he *had* heard her slug Lawrence, just as she had obviously hoped he would have.

Ray could smell the aroma of Lesa's warm damp body behind him now. The sight of her wet hair slicked back away from her temples and that beautiful broad forehead, the way he had loved so much to see it back in the Big Apple so long ago now, was all fresh in his mind even though he could not yet see her. The plethora of related memories from the suite in the Sheltry all came flooding back.

"What are you doing in here all by yourself then, Ray Bonn? I saw you up there on the verandah and hoped you were alone."

"Sitting here alone in the sunset of my life waiting for God, I guess."

"Well, she's come for you now, Ray. She wants you to come and be with her always... forever and ever. Amen." Her hand was soft against the gray roughness of his cheek. "Seriously Ray, what *are* you thinking?"

"Can't you tell that I'm just sitting here waiting for a sunset like I said. It's damned purty don't you think, Ma'am?"

Lesa smiled at this, remembering the lines from the cartoon doggerel to quote back to him, from her fond memories of that day at the Met in the Big Apple, when they had just fallen in love. It was yet another reminder of all that they had shared back then and all she hoped they could share again:

*"Don't think all folks is lowbrows
With no beauty in their souls,
'Cause they don't stand there a gapin'
With their eyes as big as bowls*

*"At some masterpiece on canvas
In a million dollar hall,*

*'Cause they may be used to real ones
By the master of 'em all.'*

Then she hopped over the edge of the chair as sprightly as a fairy child to settle down upon his lap as light as a dove's feather. With her left arm around his neck, she kissed his cheek.

"Hello, Cowboy," she said.

The motel's white Turkish bathrobe she had on gaped open at the neck, her right breast was fully exposed. He squeezed her with his right arm that was around the small of her back now as she cuddled into his body all the way down into his melancholy mood.

"I like seeing the sun get squeezed down with the denser extended atmosphere as it nears the horizon, don't you, Ray?" she said.

"Yeah, and the jagged pixilation it produces. Damn purty."

"Uh huh."

"Have you ever seen the 'green dot', Lesa?"

"No. I've heard about it and even looked it up on the internet. I've always wanted to see it, but I never have, have you?"

"I have actually. We were down here on the coast with the kids one time. It was just a day or two after a friend and I had, for some reason or other, been using the angular rate of fall of the sun on some systems engineering project at work. The green dot phenomenon came up and because of the rate of fall of the sun, I calculated that if one were sitting down and saw the green dot, one could jump up and see it happen all over again. So anyway, we were all sitting on a long log on the beach, watching to see whether we could see the green dot and after the sun had become a single red pixel that disappeared, it happened. There was this momentary pinprick of very intense bright green light." Ray used his left index finger and thumb as though he held a pin in them, pointing at the sun. "We all jumped up, and we did," he paused, "we all saw it again."

"Oh, Ray that is so wonderful. Do you think we'll see it tonight?"

"I don't know. You know, it seemed so easy that time, being just a day or two after having thought about it at work, and on that first occasion at the ocean right after that, poof, there it was just by taking notice, it seemed. It seemed like whenever it was clear like it is now that one would be able to see it, but there's more to it than that. The atmospheric conditions evidently have to be just exactly right in other ways as well, because in all the occasions I've watched at the ocean, looking for it over the years when it was clear and conditions seemed just right, I have never seen it again. So, I don't know; I've seen a light greenish flash, but nothing like that. I guess it is indeed a very rare phenomenon."

"Ray, I love you holding my breast like that."

He noticed that indeed his left hand had settled back to cup that lovely appendage tipped by the pastel pink that virtually everyone who mattered in his life knew he liked so very much. He had noticed her exposed breast earlier, but he had been oblivious to moving his hand to cradle it.

"Me too," he said. "I guess pink nipples are an obsession of mine."

"I like being a part of that obsession of yours." She kissed him again and again. "Oh Ray, why can't we be together? Nothing really matters but love, Ray." And she lay back against him watching the sun's height contract and then its width began to narrow as it dipped past its equator. The stratified lines of darkening red dropped one by one behind the horizon until there was but a single red pixel. Then it too disappeared. And then after just the briefest moment there was a most brilliant spot of intensely green light.

Lesla bounded to her feet. "I saw it, Ray! I saw it *twice*, Ray. I saw it twice! Did you see it, Ray? Did you see it?" She turned to face him, her robe dropping to the floor as she jumped back into his lap with her knees on each side of his hips. She held his face in her breasts a moment squeezing him to her, and then proceeded to kiss him all over his head. Ray had his hands helplessly on her buttocks, and then around her trim smooth waist. She reared up sitting there on his thighs and threw her arms out wide looking at him like a happily mating swan. "We're in the same universe again, Ray."

He smiled at her exuberance and said, "I'm experiencing double RGB vision right now, Lesla. It's truly marvelous."

"RGB, as in red-green-blue, right, Ray? Two pastel pink nipples that you love, two rare green dots of which you saw but one but believe me about the other, and my two lovely blues as you used to refer to them, am I right, Ray?"

"Heerz lukinnng ut eu keed." It was Ray's best Peter Sellers impersonation.

Lesla busted out laughing and was down cuddling in his arms again with her hands on his face and his on her smooth body.

"It's like it was just last night that you held me in your arms, and it's been over a year, Ray. Do you know that? Over a year that I've not seen you or felt the touch of your eyes or your hands on my body. It isn't right, Ray. Time is passing us by."

He just held her without responding other than the slight variations of pressure with which his hands and arms held her to him.

They lay there as the darkness deepened in a relaxed state of deep sighs that Ray noticed turned ever so gradually into Lesla's mode of deep breathing when she slept that he remembered as though it had been just the previous night. Then he too drifted off into a comfortable slumber.

Sometime later Lesla stirred, waking him. "I'm cold, Ray. Take me to your bed." She crawled off his lap and gave him a hand to lift him out of the expansive chair. She led him to the bedroom, where she proceeded to pull his T-shirt off over his head. Then she reached down to unfasten his belt, a task he attempted to take over from her, but she did not let go of his belt. "Me, Ray! Let me."

They looked at each other in the dim light that oozed through the bedroom curtains. Finally, Ray took his hand away and Lesla undid his belt with some awkwardness. Noticing that awkwardness elated Ray in ways he only vaguely understood. She unbuttoned the top button on his jeans and unzipped them.

Then as though she were afraid that some inhibition would take possession of him before she could get them off, she grabbed his jeans and shorts at the waist on each side and fell to her knees letting her weight jerk the two articles of clothing as a unit down with her. She knelt there facing his phallus that bounced uncontrollably. She kissed its wetness with relish as it bounded upward, and she hugged him to her.

"No, Lesa!"

There was the much-feared inhibition, the prohibition against biological urges. It fought those very evolutionary forces out of which ethics, morality, and prudery had somehow sprang like the elaborated useless plumage of exotic birds from the functional slimy realm of dinosaurs, miraculous perhaps, but disastrous, nonetheless. He stood there, this presumptuous lump of clay denying the primordial muck from which it had originated.

"God damn you!" she screamed. She jumped up then and stormed out of the room. He heard the door between their apartments slam.

He stood there, shocked and humiliated. What should he do? What could he do now anyway? Why was he such a prude, he wondered? 'Helen'. She had joked that his *brakes* would trump even Lesa's turbo-powered *purring engine*. He had known what she had meant, what she knew about him, how she had known it, how she had made it so. But... this....

He realized that 'faithfulness' had become just another form of perversion for him, and yet he could not see embracing promiscuity as any right answer. Although in all honesty, he knew that was not the correct logical dichotomy. He *was* promiscuous. Even Helen knew it. She was not impressed by his not having had intercourse with a woman with whom he had eagerly slept, who had seen every bit of him and whose body he knew intimately.

Helen would maintain that since the full extent of their epidermises had touched each other except for those small areas that covered his penis and lined Lesa's virginal vagina, why was he pretending that the same generic form of epidermis did not cover those areas too? Clearly it did. They were just elaborate Klein bottles. What was the moral high ground he pretended to? Was it in fact the ejaculation of sperm that would penetrate the cervix, swim up fallopian tubes, one tiny wriggling cell of which might actually penetrate the cellular wall of an ovum to become something irreversibly deeper than 'skin deep'? How did contraception alter that discussion? Did it? Would that make it just two people experiencing pleasure with no direct contact in those prohibited areas of the epidermis at all? Was craving contact with another human being and the joys of human intercourse tantamount to adultery? Was that the logical breach of fidelity? Was Jimmy Carter an adulterer? Does nothing else matter once one has crossed that line of desire?

He had not moved in some time when he felt a warm hand on his shoulder, soft breasts pressed against his back, a gentle kiss on his cheek. He began to live again. His penis throbbed and bounced eagerly again. He turned, pushing himself against her, kissing her ravenously.

Gently Lesa said, "No, Ray, not tonight. Tonight, we can sleep together like we have already. You save that thing for Helen if you must. I know what it is; I know what it wants; I want it too. You and I, we live in Shadowland, Ray. Do you understand what I mean?"

"Yes," he said. "It really doesn't make any sense though, does it?"

"No Ray, it doesn't make any sense to me at all, but it's you, and you are all that matters to me in the world. Please sleep with me like we have before or any way you want to; be true to who you are." And so Ray continued being true to unto himself, but the self to which he was now true had become two-fold. Lesa realized that the bridge of which she had fantasized was much closer to completion than it had ever been and her two-fold self of which she had become aware so long ago was the only self with which she would ever identify.

Next morning, they awoke still together, each feeling the other, sexually aroused and kissing until they absolutely had to get going. Lesa liked him being unashamed of his sexual arousal. They showered and dried together in his bathroom talking and teasing as she went back and forth through the open door between their rooms to fetch her clothes.

Down at their continental breakfast, they saw Lawrence and Margot who sat together now. Both Ray and Lesa acknowledged them casually as they got their croissants, juices, and coffees. Lawrence's left eyelid was bluish and swollen nearly shut. When Ray and Lesa sat to eat, Margot and Lawrence seemed to stare daggers in their direction and rose to leave very shortly.

"I don't think Margot loves you anymore, Ray," was Lesa's comment.

"No. Lawrence didn't seem to want to play with you either."

They checked out and began the trip back to Portland from the coast. Early on during the several hour trip, Lesa proceeded to tell Ray about the next conference where one of their papers was to be presented. It would be in London in a few weeks. "You have to come, Ray. You just have to come."

"No. This is my last conference, Lesa. I didn't belong here. I can't stand watching all those men pawing all over you, and yet I know you must someday end up with one of them. I know you have to have fun, Lesa, but I just don't like watching. It breaks my heart. They are your age. It's a matter of vintage, cultural coherence."

"No! I most certainly will *not* end up with one of those simps or *anyone* else but Ray Bonn. Ray Bonn! Do you hear me? I have never been so frivolous as I was at this conference. That's not what I'm like at these things. I'm sorry. I never will be like that again, Ray, I promise. Never. I was jealous of Margot too you know and *trying* to make you jealous. She would've spread her legs and fucked you in a minute."

Ray looked over at Lesa, shocked at the way she spoke any more.

Lesa reacted immediately. "What are you so shocked about, Ray? I'm not supposed to know that word? I know it. Okay? For God sakes, Ray, this is not the age of innocence! The biological human species is out here waiting for you to join it instead of just *thinking* about it. I was the only virgin left in the

fucking world Ray, not *you*. Can you grasp that? It's *not* you; you egotistical son of a bitch! I've been this damned vestal virgin that even I can't stand, just because you've been too God damned pure to fuck me. Yes. Fuck me. Helen loves you and I know that she loves that you fuck her. But she doesn't give a rat's ass whether you fuck me or not, because she knows that you and I are incurably in love with each other whether we fuck like a couple of demented weasels or not. She's smart enough to know that neither one of us mean any harm to anybody else, especially her. How can a brilliant fucking superhero be so God damned stupid, Ray? Tell me. How can you be so God damned stupid!? What is wrong with you? Wasn't last night good for you?"

Lesa sat there then for ten minutes hunched over, not saying anything, flushed and breathing hard so that Ray imagined smoke and steam shooting from her nostrils. He drove on feeling a knife-sharp pain in his left shoulder that ached all the way through to his chest. Everything he saw, he saw through a deep fog. It was as though all he wanted was to curl up into the fetal position and die.

When Lesa finally did break the silence, it was with, "And you belonged there, God damn you! And in me too! With me and in me – that's where you belong Ray. All you are ever aware of is the impression others are making on you. The men probably seemed to you to be avoiding you, didn't they? Of course, they avoid you, Ray. They're scared to death of you! You've probably never watched a video of what your face looked like on TV between grand slams, or in that interview afterward where you humiliated that reporter. You do it every time, Ray. Every God damned time!"

"Every one of those people at this conference, or anywhere else you will ever go will have seen all those images of you. Not just the home runs Ray. They listened to you annihilate that reporter. They are afraid to get very close to anyone who looks like the guy in the Titian painting that you told me about whose power and authority ooze from the painting centuries after Titian placed him there. Who wouldn't be afraid of you?" She paused here for a moment. "A woman, Ray. That's who. They know you are kind to women.

"I searched for that painting, Ray; it's not in Paris. I think it's the *Doge Andrea Gritti* in the National Museum. I stood in front of it when I was in Washington and got all the feelings from it you had. He is a truly fearsome looking character, Ray; he looks mean... You said you thought that must be how Sir Isaac Newton looked." She paused, "But do you know what? He looks just like you looked that day at Yankee Stadium. Before anyone will ever relax around you, you will have to convince them that that's not really you. And it isn't you. I love you, because it isn't. I learned you from the inside out; I guess it's better that way. But don't scowl all the time for Christ's sake. That's not fucking *impossible* is it?"

Then she was silent again for many minutes as they drove on at a reduced speed because Ray could not put any force on the gas pedal or anything else. He was emotionally exhausted.

Eventually she calmed down and they interacted briefly on trivia, after she had broken the silence again finally, with some comment concerning how beautiful it was in Oregon. She told him he should maybe speed up, if he didn't plan on taking her home with him to meet Helen. She laughed then, maybe a little sardonically, but it seemed more tolerable between them at last, and Ray speeded up.

Just before they exited for the road to the airport off of I-205 she loosened her seat belt and leaned way over to give him a long passionate kiss. Then she said, "Ray, please remember yesterday evening and the RGB vision and all we shared last night and this morning. Forget today, all right?"

He looked over at her and said, "I'll try to address these issues, Lesa. I do know that it's me who is all fucked up."

She smiled and kissed him again before refastening her seat belt.

They got to the airport with just enough time for her to check her bags at the curb and run off to catch her flight. With no particular show of affection after getting to the airport itself, she was gone, and Ray was left with hours of living with the image of himself she had painted like graffiti or cave paintings on the inside of his skull.

How truly ugly he was – the beast of the ballet.

He was "fucking" ugly; there was no doubt about that. And "chicken shit" too. The ugliness of the language he used to address his person seemed to fit his offenses.

But what was he to do about it? The problem went much deeper than his scowl. It was he, himself – all the way down to whatever was cringing in the bottom muck of his being. And he had no idea who it was he was addressing way down beneath all the guises and pride of the tough guy image he had hid behind his whole life. Was he the man who had fallen madly in love with Lesa and was afraid to address what that meant in terms of losing the security of Helen and his family? Or was he the loving husband who had had an awkward affair and was too selfish to let that go, to make a clean break that Lesa could learn to accept as her freedom to make a meaningful life for herself? He didn't feel like either of those alternative extremely evil people. Worse than that, he felt like *both* of them.

He was somewhere between, on a tightrope over an abyss with helpers at both ends trying desperately to help him make it to their side. Was that it? Were the ones at each end to blame while he was the innocent victim in between? That answer did not fly. Ray felt certain that the one at either end would have helped him even to make it to the *other* side to stay forever if that were what he wanted. They both seemed to love him without regard to winning or losing him. But this entire network of thoughts on what to do about himself went nowhere. The "who am I?" and "What am I doing here?" questions went nowhere. What was last night?

After a deliberated vacating of thoughts during which he stared at the dashes of white between lanes darting by him, he began again. Who is Lesa?

And then, of course, who is Helen? They were the ones at the ends of the tight rope. But who were they?

Had he bought into Lesa's soul mate version of his reality? Did it make any sense at all? Ray was as sure that the soul was illusory as he was that the illusion of matter being continuous all the way past the atomic level was illusion. Could concepts like that be true *and* untrue. Illusions. Lesa had to feel the same way about archaic religious notions of the soul. He knew that.

What is a "soul mate" anyway? What does Lesa think it is? He knew that it involved looking at things the same way, the same associations of one idea to the next, and perhaps the same set of priorities on what is important. These first two notions seemed to fit the situation. That was why their collaboration had worked so well, why Lesa knew he could hit a baseball without ever having heard about it or having him demonstrate it for her. She knew how he worked. It all fit together in the model she had of him in her head. That was it then: Soul mates had this working model of the other in their minds that operates exactly as they themselves operate. That allows them to empathize completely with the thoughts of the other. That was it.

But the priorities part didn't seem to work. He and Lesa had different priorities on virtues for one thing. Different priorities on being true to someone you loved. But did they? Or were Lesa's ideas not fully developed yet? Was she unwilling to universalize her desires? Or was it he himself?

But even without having completely resolved any part of his current dilemma, there was a sort of satisfaction at having rationalized what being Lesa's soul mate was really all about. That was why he understood her too. He had a model of her in his head based on how he would act in her place. But his model of Lesa Sorensen was not as good as the one she had of Ray Bonn. He knew that to be a fact. She could probably extrapolate the rest of his life for him in her head – the ultimate determinism. He mused on that a while knowing finally that she would reject it the same way he had rejected Einstein's velocity addition formula as too neat a solution to determining the experience of someone else without the actual observation. One would have to live their life to know what events would transpire.

But Ray had no doubt that Lesa would have every bit as good a prediction for how he would react to a given circumstance as he would. Better even. Maybe love was the difference. Maybe he hadn't loved her enough to make the effort to understand her well enough to construct a complete model as she had seemed to of him. Was that it, his selfishness.

What about Helen? Who was she?

She certainly knew Ray intimately, but Helen knew him in a very different way than Lesa knew him. It was almost as though Lesa had memorized his user's manual, or that she could use her own user's manual on him, but Helen had written his user's manual. Ray smiled as he mused about this thought. That was it all right.

Helen had conditioned virtually all his responses by being the dominant "only child twin" in his life. From the time he could first remember anything,

Helen chose the games and told him the rules. He was good at all the games. He could usually beat her at them, her rules or not, but she knew how he would react in a given situation, not because she had a model of him in her own brain, but because she knew the rules she had programmed into him. He laughed aloud as he thought about it driving by the juvenile detention center in Chehalis. The boys in there probably had not been taught the rules, he thought, approving of his own childhood.

So here he was, this robot who was completely understood by two women who played with his controls, each using her unique advantage. And here he was, stuck halfway between, programmed, simulated, and controlled, the alpha-minus protagonist of an updated version of Huxley's *Brave New World*, eight centimeters shorter than the usual alpha. That's where he was, when GPS reported him to be in the driveway of his own home with the garage door going up like the curtain on a stage on which he had a significant role to play.

What Helen learned about their time at the conference on the coast she learned almost exclusively from Lesa. She noticed something was definitely wrong with Ray. She knew it would be easier to find out about whatever it was from Lesa than from him, so she called her the first day after Lesa got back to Boston.

But that line of inquiry was not very productive either. What she gathered was that Ray had not been as 'chummy' as Lesa would have liked. Also, she gathered that he didn't like the way she *chummed* with all the others at the conference. Helen had largely fabricated the story out of the scraps of material she was given, and because the principals weren't talking, it all made sense to her. Ray's not having been happy with his keynote address and reticence to say whether he would ever be going to another conference confirmed it for her. Her version seemed credible and she needed it to be true right then.

Other than his seeming to sulk, and being down for whatever reason, Helen decided Ray was just being Ray, only more so.

Ray concentrated the remainder of the weekend, to the extent that he concentrated on anything at all, on getting Helen to that doctor's appointment she had made but had threatened to cancel because she was "feeling fine".

Ray insisted, "I don't think you feel fine, Helen. We've lived together over thirty years and you seem a little different."

"Is it thirty years, Ray? And after all these years, you've finally noticed that I'm just a little different. I thought that was why you loved me in the first place," she teased.

"I'm sure you notice me noticing you, just like I notice you noticing me," Ray told her.

"You notice me noticing you?" she asked. "What do you think I'm thinking when I'm noticing you then?"

"You notice to see whether I'm being taken in by floozies for one thing, like you always have. You think, 'Yes, he is,' or 'No, he isn't,' depending on whether I am or not."

She came over and sat comfortably on his lap. "You do notice me noticing you, don't you? You learned your lesson well that day up at our secret place, didn't you? So, do I think you were taken in on this last trip or not?"

"I still hear you squeal when a floozy gets too close," he said, laughing awkwardly. "No, I think you're too good at understanding me to think I would be unfaithful with anyone in more than a bend-but-don't-break sort of way. Remember, we both know floozies can be very wonderful people too."

She beamed at his awareness of her and others close to them that they had both loved as dear friends. "Is it getting harder to bend without breaking with Lesa? Is that why you hadn't wanted to see her in over a year and say you will be attending no more conferences with her?"

"Yes, and Yes."

"You have to loosen up," she said, holding his head in her arms, "but I love you just the way you are my 'only-child twin!'"

Then they held each other tightly with Helen telling Ray what a wonderful life they had had together in a way he didn't like.

#10 Addressing Hard Facts

The next day Ray took Helen to the clinic for the checkup only to find out that she had already had the *checkup* and this *visit* was something else altogether. A *follow-up*.

Helen said, "Come with me," when they called her. She took Ray's hand to have him follow her. They were directed to a room where the doctor would see her.

"You sure you want me in here?" Ray asked. "Silver studs make me nervous."

"Oh, they're not so bad, just a little colder than a happily married woman is used to," she teased. The doctor came in while they were still chuckling. That frivolity ceased.

"Hello Mrs. Bonn, how are you feeling so far?"

"Fine," she said.

Ray was confused. This could not be pregnancy... could it... she was... well... his age.

"So far?" Ray reiterated and looked from Helen to the doctor.

"Oh, hello. It is indeed a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Bonn." The doctor and Ray shook hands. "Yes, your wife has been seeing me for a few weeks now. We've diagnosed the problem, but I'm afraid there isn't much we can do for it."

Tears started flowing down Ray's cheeks involuntarily, just flowing uncontrollably. He couldn't remember the last time he had actually cried. He had felt like crying many times in his adult life, but always his tears were somehow blocked. A 'man-thing' he had always thought.

Ray said, "Please excuse me, but would you begin at the beginning with me. I'm not good at reading between lines."

"Your wife didn't want to disrupt your important involvement in making the keynote address at the thermodynamics conference last week, so she chose not to inform you beforehand that we would be initiating chemotherapy last Friday."

Ray looked at Helen and she looked right back with no waver. "Helen, I didn't even want to go to that conference. I should have been here with you,

and you should never have kept that from me. I'm your husband! I love you. You're my life!" Then looking at the doctor again he asked, "What is it? What kind of cancer? What's the prognosis? What's to be expected?"

"Well, your reaction was expected, of course. But you must realize that your wife, and everyone else, knows the significance of your work, and..."

"Oh, bull shit!" Ray virtually screamed. "Nothing in my life is as important as Helen. Nothing! But you haven't told me what she has." Then turning to Helen, he asked, "Helen, what do you have?"

"I understand that I have pancreatic cancer and the prognosis is not all that good. I thought I should start the chemo as soon as possible because I thought that was what you would want me to do, so there has been no delay, and you could not have done anything that didn't get done anyway. I know I will need you to get through this, but I didn't need you for that part. I thought it would keep you involved in your scientific activities a little bit longer before you help me through this."

Ray looked at the doctor who didn't say anything, so Ray said, "What's going to happen? What do I do?"

"Well, Mr. Bonn. The chemo will be going on for another month and a half if Helen is strong enough for the entire sequence. Then we will explore other options which may include a series of radiation treatments."

"Helen, do you know the details that he's not telling me?"

"Yes."

"Will you tell me, or do I have to strangle it out of this doctor?"

"I'll tell you everything, of course. I just thought this might be the right place for you to get on board."

"Am I on board, doctor?" Ray asked looking intensely at the doctor, reading his nametag as he did so, since he didn't recall having ever heard his name. "Has she had MRI and CAT scans, Dr. Madsen?"

"Yes, she has had magnetic resonance and computerized tomographic imaging done."

"Did you see the images, Helen?"

"Yes, I did."

"May I see them doctor and have you explain what I see?"

"Would that be okay with you, Mrs. Bonn?" the doctor deferred to Helen's desire relative to whether to show Ray. Ray really didn't like that kind of collusion.

"Yes, of course, show or tell him anything."

The doctor took Ray to look at the images and learn just how bad the prognosis was. "Shouldn't she have been experiencing severe symptoms with that major of a problem."

"It's hard to tell, Mr. Bonn. Every case is different, and although we can diagnose the cancer fairly certainly, of course, its manifestation from a subjective patient's perspective is hard to gage. It's also hard to predict the course it may take."

"Doctor, I'm into science. I need some data here. What is the usual course prognosis in these cases? Does the chemo work 10 percent, 50 percent or 90 percent of the time? If that doesn't work, does the radiation work 10 percent, etc.? You know what I want."

"The percentages are very low with cases this far advanced."

Ray stammered, "So, less than 10 percent, I assume. If these don't work, how long does Helen have to live?"

"Yes, considerably less than ten. I would say four to six months at the most."

Ray was not done. "Will these treatments make it easier or harder for Helen over the next four to six months?"

"Harder, I suppose, but we have no other hope."

"It sounds to me as though you give *no* hope, period. Isn't that right?" Ray asked.

"Just about."

Ray was distraught. "Thank you." He went back to Helen with the doctor following him.

Helen was standing when they returned, ready to go.

"Will you be here tomorrow for your treatment, Mrs. Bonn?"

"I will let you know," she told Dr. Madsen calmly. She knew Ray realized that she had started the chemo just so he couldn't blame himself for her not having started it earlier. He would be quite sure the doctor had not really recommended it, she knew.

Ray had something worth worrying about, besides the abstractions with which he idled away his time, to worry about for a change. There was reason to believe that whatever his concern, it would be of no avail.

And that, as they say, was that.

They were in the car before either of them spoke again. It was Ray who broke the silence with, "Would you like some Thai food, Helen?"

"I'd love some, Honey," she said smiling.

They had their favorite soup and entrée with tea.

"What did the doctor tell you, Helen?" Ray asked, apparently without emotion.

"Four to six months," she said looking at him her eyes undisturbed.

"Have you told anybody?"

"No."

"You gonna?"

"I need you to help me."

"Good. But you know what?"

"What?"

"I'm going to need you to help me even more, just because you're used to it. You're better at it."

"I know. I will," she smiled.

"You already have, of course. But Helen, will you let me do my part of this, the way I want to do it?"

"What do you mean, Ray? You can't do anything about it."

"I mean, you call all the shots because you know how to. But let me make them happen for you. Conserve your energy and let me suspend my whole life just to be with you and make those shots. Will you let me do that?"

"Okay, if that's what you want and if I can do whatever I want."

"Yes, always, of course, but what do you mean, 'If you can do whatever you want'? Of course, you can, and if I can help you with it, I want to."

"Okay, there are just two things I know I want right now."

"Number one?"

"I do not want any more chemo."

Ray thought for a moment. "Okay. Number two?"

"I want to meet Lesa."

Ray was shaken. Tears welled up in his eyes instantly again then, "Oh, Helen, why? That's over. It's fine."

"You don't have to be there. I would rather you weren't."

"Helen that wasn't your fault. She's impetuous. You know that."

"I was mean to her, Ray, and I love her too. I did it intentionally to hurt her. I want to hold her and tell her how truly sorry I am for that comment, and that awful period in our lives."

Ray didn't say anything, but the tears wouldn't stop.

"Ray, I think I understand. I want you to make all the shots for me..." she paused. "Except that one. Will you let me make that one?"

He nodded finally.

"You're being wonderful, Ray. How shall we tell the children?"

"Your shot," he said. "I'll just try to help it hit the target." He smiled while wiping his eyes. They finished their dinner calmly and with casual conversation involving their children, a few memories of Allie and her children, Jamie, Eddie, Cecil, Stephanie, and Lisa's baby.

What did Ray think of Lisa by the way?

He thought she was lovely, and he had noticed she was pregnant that night after the seventh game of the series.

So had Helen. She hadn't mentioned it to Ray because of what she had said to the other Lesa.

Ray smiled and said, "You know what, Helen, I didn't mention it to you for that same reason." They shared a healthy laugh and Ray said, "It's too bad when people who are in love quit sharing isn't it?"

"It is, Ray. Can we share to the end?"

"Let's."

Ray let Helen cancel the chemotherapy but was on the phone talking with the doctor thoughtfully as she did. He let Helen line up the family for an occasion so as not to predispose them all to something out of the ordinary. When Jamie said that he didn't think that he and Judy could make it because

Judy was going to be needing him to line up some repair she wanted done on their house, Ray arranged to have lunch with Jamie the next day. He told Helen what he had arranged so she could have input. He was going to confide in Jamie in order to get him to come. Jamie could handle the situation, he thought, didn't she? She did. Jamie did.

Ray and Jamie had one of their most meaningful interactions in many years, maybe ever, a sincere interplay of intimacies that made Ray proud of Jamie once again.

Helen decided that summer or no summer, they would have turkey. The decision reminded Ray in some roundabout way of the Thanksgiving that day he had taken Lesa to the Sorensen's.

Ray had never been all that helpful in household chores, he recalled remorsefully. Not at all, actually. He was very inept at such things, but he enjoyed working elbow to elbow with Helen now. She said he was very good help, which filled him with a sort of pride he had never felt.

He realized for the first time that although the Bonns had become what could only be classified as 'filthy rich' by any standards in the histories of their families, Helen had not availed herself of maid service, recommended that they arrange yard service, or bought a new car. Nothing. "Why?" he asked Helen.

"Oh," she said, "It has something to do with your being willing to trade all the money you got for the privacy you had had before." She had decided right then that they would not lose any of their privacy they didn't actually have to.

Ray hadn't realized the lengths to which she had gone to preserve their serene sanctuary... their secret place.

The family all arrived at very close to the same time, but Jamie and Judy were first. Jamie knew his mother knew he had been told ahead of time. He kissed her with tears in his eyes. He had them dried before anyone else got there.

Judy was lovely. She began at once helping in the kitchen and was extremely competent and pleasant help. She actually chatted with a relaxed intimacy about their plans for their house, how she would like to have a children's bedroom handy to theirs, to which, of course, Helen was no little bit surprised. Yes, she said, Eddie and Lisa's baby is so darling that she and Jamie were hoping that they would get lucky one of these times. They really hadn't given luck much of a chance until now though she said.

Helen was hugging her and kissed her just when Allie was coming around the corner into the kitchen.

Allie was surprised also at the domesticity and charm of what she had formerly considered "the refrigeration unit". Cecil and Stephanie were delighted to be having Christmas dinner in July. Tom liked the idea too except for, "Why did they have to call them Toms?" Then Eddie and Lisa arrived from California with their bundle of work, Eddie Lee Bonn.

Ray carved the turkey unprofessionally, with Jamie doing a large share of it, as Ray picked up other chores to get things all on the table while they were

hot. His kids were surprised. Dinner was delicious, of course, as only a mama can do it. Desert too. There were several kinds of pie – apple for Allie, Helen and Judy; lemon meringue for Cecil, Stephanie, and most everyone. Helen's first attempt with Ray's mother's recipe for mincemeat pie was deemed a success by Eddie, Tom, and Ray.

When dinner was over everyone was very helpful in the kitchen. Lisa was helping industriously with Ray, Judy, Allie and Stephanie. The other men were more or less standing around as ornaments wondering why they were there. Eddie was babysitting with Helen sitting by him making over Little Eddie.

When that was done Ray said, let's go out on the terrace, your mother and I have something to tell you. Ray could see apprehension taking form where there had been none. Jamie and Judy had done well.

Helen, with Ray right beside her, laid out the situation in all its objective grimness. Everyone cried. Ray was proud of his boys. Somewhere along the line they had become more emotionally complete individuals than he had, a fact for which Ray took no credit. There were medical questions about what was known for certain, what were the probabilities, how long had she known, why hadn't she told them before, why hadn't she sensed the symptoms earlier, seemingly ad infinitum. All their questions were answered honestly in one way or another.

Then Helen stopped them with: "Everyone dies. We will *all* die. Even Little Eddie here will die. The tragedy cannot be in dying then, can it, but in not having lived. The extent to which we do not reach our full potential, is the only true tragedy.

"I have very few regrets and I'm going to work to rectify what I am aware of having failed at, if it is amenable to fixing. What better thing can any of us do. You here are all proof of my having lived a good life, and I want to thank each one of you for that, not just my children and their children, but their spouses too for proving that about me.

"Our children have indeed chosen wisely in their spouses and are raising their children nobly, what better proof could there be than that, that they too are blessed with *good* lives."

She paused then and said in a completely everyday sort of way, "That was pretty preachy. Let's just enjoy what time we have, instead of doing any more of this kind of stuff." Still laughing in her way, she said, "You know what? I think I need to lie down for a little while. I want to preserve every bit of strength I have left."

Ray walked with her to their room; then she had him return to the 'kids'.

But it got grim in a hurry as the disease ineluctably progressed. Helen didn't eat much of anything no matter what Ray fixed her, or ordered and had sent in, or that Allie fixed on the many occasions when she was there. Allie seemed very shaken the first few weeks.

Judy came fairly often to sit with Helen to discuss various things. The layout of the children's room was something she wanted to discuss with Helen,

what she had done in various cases with children as far as discipline and many other related issues that filled Helen with pride and a mother's joy. Judy would bring treats she knew Helen had used to enjoy. But the real pleasure for Helen was coming to know what a lovely wife Jamie had after all.

"How strange the uninformed impressions we get," she told Ray.

#11 Living in the Past

As the days wore on Helen slept more and more. Ray either sat by her bedside reading or was in on his computer, close enough to hear her if she stirred. When she 'stirred', it was often with muted moans from pain.

The dismal present and immediate future drove Helen into the past and Ray with her. She wanted to hear about the past. He found that activity quite enjoyable; perhaps that was what senility was all about, he thought, just an intelligent avoidance of the ugliness of the present.



At first, of course, it was the pleasant memories of early childhood, playing with Helen. He could not remember a time when Helen had not been

an integral part of everything he considered to be *his* life. Some of his earliest memories involved playing under covers with her, when their parents were noisily playing cards. It seemed as though it must have been at least once a week that their parents met at one of their homes or the other to play cards after supper during those early years. Shortly in those proceedings, the two 'only-child twins' as they became called would be put to bed – usually in the same bed unless they misbehaved.

Ray mentioned this situation on one of those occasions when they lay on their bed resting in the afternoon, talking.

Helen smiled, thinking how cute their relationship must have seemed to their parents. She thought again as a mother Ray realized. He wondered why he didn't see similar things as a father. He didn't know why, but that he didn't was a simple fact.

"Do you remember when we'd be separated after going to bed?" she asked him.

He thought for only a moment. "Dad thought kids should be seen and not heard, didn't he?"

"Yes. It was always your father who would yell at us to quiet down and get to sleep and then separate us if we weren't quiet," Helen noted.

"Yeah, he was the tight ass of the bunch, wasn't he? I guess I got that from him." They both laughed and finally acknowledged that neither of them thought it was true.

"Usually it would be me who was doing the giggling and teasing you, but it was always him who came in and scolded *you*, and put you on the couch, if he had to come in again." They laughed.

Ray thought about it like he had never had occasion to before.

"But I like thinking about us as we got a little older," Helen said.

"Yeah, it was fun being in grade school with you," Ray contributed. "We were always on opposite sides of the room though, after the first couple of days each year. Teachers separated us because we talked."

"I used to talk across the room at you anyway, remember? You'd pretend you couldn't read my lips, but you could." She paused. "You always came over to my place to do homework after school. I don't think you'd have even done it otherwise."

"I probably wouldn't have. I liked it over at your folk's place though. It wasn't like it was very far or that both our moms weren't usually there too," he said. "Your mom fed us pretty well, and your dad was more into just being a dad than mine, I guess."

"I would kiss you and you didn't like it. Do you remember?"

Ray did.

On another occasion when they were resting together Helen asked, "Ray, do you know my favorite memory of all?"

"No, what?"

"Homecoming night our senior year."

"I remember," he said, but he didn't remember it as having been his favorite memory. "You were Homecoming Queen," he empathized.

"Yes, but that isn't part of the memory."

He knew what was.

"Remember that pass you threw for that last touchdown that people said was longer than most professional quarterbacks could throw?"

He remembered that too, but he knew that that was no part of her fondest memory either. He also knew that he was supposed to recall fondly what had transpired later that night.

Helen had dozed off, he noticed, and so his thoughts ran on to the state championship football game later that year. Jonesy had dropped five passes, two had bounced off his chest for interceptions, one for a touchdown for the other side. He had also fumbled the ball once when he was going in for a sure touchdown for Canyon Creek. Ray had been so mad at Jonesy during that game that he had felt like beating the crap out of him – *again*. It came down in the end to the Golden Devils having one last play in which to pull the game out, down twenty-four to twenty-one and only a few seconds left.

Ray had been determined to win that game. "Jonesy," he had said as they circled around him in the huddle, "go straight down to the end zone and turn around. If you miss this one, I'm gonna' beat your face to a bloody God damned pulp!"

The team had all laughed awkwardly as they broke the huddle, somewhat to the amazement of the opposing team's players because of what they perceived as a much more intense situation. Jonesy had indeed pushed his six-foot six-inch frame from his position at tight end straight down to the end zone from the twenty-two-yard line. Ray had scrambled around, avoiding tacklers until Jonesy got there. Then with just a glimpse of Jonesy's number and a tackler around his own ankles, Ray threw as hard as he could, right for Jonesy's midsection intending hatefully to drill it so deeply into his navel that it would get stuck there so that even Jonesy couldn't miss it. Between reaching hands and flying bodies that were all too slow, the speeding bullet had indeed found Jonesy's soft underbelly, driving him over backwards, but with the ball firmly lodged in his midsection as time had run out. The Golden Devils were State A Champions... again.

Helen opened her eyes with a smile, "That was a wonderful night."

"It was," he did agree, readjusting dates. They had never addressed this issue together, nor its consequences... until now.

"That night I was pregnant with Allie, you know."

He did not verbalize a questioning, "was?" but he thought it. "Became," he corrected in his head as he continued to stare at Helen without comment.

Helen was still smiling. "You paid the price for my wanting to know what it really felt like without restraint, without protection."

There was a long pause, Ray just looked at her embarrassed. Helen had a wan smile, Ray flashed back to a more recent night with Lesa. He had never been proud of sexual prowess – that night or any night. He had never been

what anyone could consider debonair. His drives and urges to that point in his life had focused on when Helen would come through as she had promised.

"It felt so wonderful, Ray, being with you like that."

Ignoring all those previously unacknowledged consequences to their lives, and whatever else, carefully avoiding any of the sarcasm of which a Bonn would be most capable such as what actually came to mind, "Whatever feels good!" Ray skirted the issue with: "Kids have more to worry about nowadays than pregnancy, I guess, don't they?"

"So did we, Ray. So did we. That changed your life forever, Ray. You wanted to go to Harvard and play baseball in the major leagues."

"Everything anyone does changes their life forever, Helen; immediately they're off doing something else. That's what life is, a sequence of just such irreversible changes. That *is* what life is. Mine were incompatible dreams; anyway you know that?"

"I preempted them, and that's not right. You were punished for my giggling when we were little too, Ray. You always bore the brunt of everything."

"Your giggling has always been worth much more than the punishment for enjoying it," he said. "Helen, let this go, please. Our lives turned out so wonderfully, how could we have asked for more?"

"You didn't get drafted in baseball because of that, worked like a slave up on the ridge carpentering to get you and me through the university, and then you didn't get degrees from the institutions you should have. Then Jamie came along halfway, before your junior year, at the university, so with two kids already you didn't get to go to grad school to get the advanced degrees you should have had. I should have been more careful. I've never adequately acknowledged, or even understood, what I did or just how awful that must have been for you, Ray"

"Helen, enough! It wasn't awful! It was wonderful! I won't allow Allie and Jamie to be lined up as major failures in our lives. Where would that leave us, Allie, and Jamie? Think about it, Helen. They are the good things that have happened to us along the way."

Helen was watching him more than just reliving it herself.

He was clearly agitated. "What happens happens," Ray said. "When it turns out to so well, why would we second guess that? Our kids got wonderfulness sprinkled on them from their mother. Anyway, I was just glad that you didn't let all your work with the kids... and you did do all the work with them... keep you from graduating from high school with a big tummy and then getting the degree you wanted from the university. You are an amazing woman, Helen. You always have been. Anyway, every red-blooded boy in three counties would have sold their soul to get it on with the Homecoming Queen from Canyon Creek that night. I won the lottery. I knew that. I know that still." He laughed then trying to lighten the tone of their conversation. "Getting to make love to you that night was a dream come true, one it seemed like I'd

waited for all my life... erasing any regrets I might ever have had for letting you stop Julie and me."

Helen let out a painful spurt of laughter. She smiled happily at last through her pain and weariness as she dozed off.

Ray was glad they had finally got that discussion out of the way. It was long overdue. He had no idea that Lesa had rebuked Helen on that topic as a major part of that four-month spat of theirs, but he knew it had always bothered Helen even though they had never discussed it before.

On another occasion, as though following up on this conversation, Helen brought up events of that first summer that her cousin Julie had come up from California in the VW bus with her hippie friends.

"That was some summer," Ray acknowledged.

"Yes. Your dad got rid of those three 'pimple-ass jackasses with seven hairs in eleven rows' didn't he." Helen recounted it vividly to which they both laughed, Helen with pain and a bit of coughing. "He scared them."

"Yeah, I think he scared everybody. He was pretty cross, wasn't he? I must have gotten that from him, huh? He wasn't too keen on 'Floozy Julie'. I think he would have spelled it with a 'P-h' if he had tried to document his feelings. He adapted that from 'Phony Joanie'. Remember that Lil' Abner cartoonist Al Capp who did the job on Joan Baez? He was an old curmudgeon of a conservative if ever there was one. Dad did have a turn of phrase though, didn't he?"

"He probably knew Julie would whisk your virginity away in a moment. She would have too, if I had let her," Helen said, laughing now at Ray.

"She could have, I suppose," Ray toyed, "but she didn't, did she?"

"No, Ray, she didn't, and you remember why she didn't too, don't you." Helen gloated before nodding off to sleep again.

Ray did remember why... and how. He supposed that was his homework assignment for while Helen slept to think on about that spring and summer when he and Helen had both been fourteen, almost fifteen. Julie had been seventeen then and very experienced. She had bragged about having had all three of her hippie boyfriends. "How many times each," she had said, and half the rest of the country, Ray suspected, both now and back then. She had been at Woodstock a couple years earlier, spreading what Ray's father called "Julie Joy," Ray figured.

Had she been abused as a child? Ray wondered now for the first time what kind of life she had had growing up. It bore some thought. It wouldn't have occurred to Adam Bonn, though... or Ray Bonn either, until now. She must have been abused he thought now.

Ray recalled that one day when he had just gotten back from the ridge, after having gone up on his horse to help his old friend Sy Olson with haying, Helen and Julie had been waiting for him in the barn. He had used to ride an antique mower for Sy behind his Ferguson tractor. The mower was an antique even then, made to be pulled behind a horse. It needed someone to lift the

cutting bar using a hand lever on each turn. Ray had liked riding the mower, hypnotically watching grass fall in waves as it was cut, the smell of new-mown hay. He liked the way Sy and his wife Aggie entertained him when he came up there on the ridge to help them. After finishing whatever he helped them with, Ray would converse while drinking homemade Root Beer that on other occasions he had helped them make.

On this particular occasion he had ridden home down the several mile trail along the canyon wall through Raven's Ravine by his and Helen's favorite waterfall, their 'secret place'. Then as he was putting Trooper away, Helen and Julie came around the side of the barn. Julie was carrying her beat up guitar and a little cloth bag. Helen said, "Don't put Trooper away yet, Ray. Let's go up to the falls to cool off."

"We've got some treats for you," Julie said, smiling mischievously as she grabbed an apple from the bag, licked it, took a provocative bite, and handed it to Ray.

Helen hopped up nimbly into the saddle. Ray, with the apple secured in his teeth, gave Julie a leg up to sit behind. Getting her up there was an awkward process; it involved Julie purposely flouncing large bra-less breasts that bobbed and bounced loosely beneath thin cotton. Bulging centers of dark areolas were startlingly evident through the blouse.

Ray had felt phallic activity then, in a way he would sometimes thereafter associate with Julie and that day. He handed the guitar up to her, but she said crassly, "Go ahead and carry it to hide your hard on."

Both girls laughed at Julie's brashness and Ray's embarrassment. He welcomed the guitar at that juncture, nonetheless.

He gnawed the symbolic apple down to the seedy core that he gave to Trooper, ruminating on the situation as he walked beside his horse and the giggling girls the mile or so until they got to the steeper part of the trail. From there he led the way on up a narrow path, Trooper's head butting him occasionally. When they reached the level again, they proceeded along the long-overgrown logging road. It was halfway up the canyon wall, overgrown beneath the forest canopy with sword ferns, vine maple, alder berries, and Indian plum. That led right to the pool he and Helen had made a couple of years earlier by damming up Raven's Creek, where it had dug across the trail.

They had secured it against the winter run off with cement Ray had taken from his father's stash of sacks to haul up draped over Trooper's saddle. It was a truly beautiful setting with the water falling in a thin sheet the ten or fifteen feet off of the next higher shelf on the canyon wall into a serene pool produced by the dam. It was three or four feet deep at its deepest just under the falls. Crested kinglets, chickadees, rufous towhees, sparrows, cedar waxwings, nuthatches, thrushes, and occasionally even scarlet tanagers bathed in spray, water skippers darted across its mirror surface, minnows and pollywogs drifted and wriggled underneath.

On all the rocks and huge trees in this section of the rain forest there was a thick cushion of various species of moss and licorice ferns, together with the

dense cover of sword ferns back in between the trees. There was a large flat cleared area with a little grass where the sun got through. Trooper was already grazing as the girls slid off. Blue and yellow forget-me-nots, as well as a lavender variation, were in full bloom along with delicate red and white bleeding hearts, and brilliant yellow buttercups.

"Wow! This is a perfect place for our commune," Julie had said.

Ray and Helen smiled at each other, pleased by such high praise of their secret place by their more senior guest.

Ray tied Trooper a little way off with the reigns low enough that he could reach a bit of grass. The three teenagers walked over to the boulders he and Helen had arranged for sitting to watch the pool when they came up here to talk. Ray sat down with the guitar, peacefully watching reflections of blue sky and green leaves and needles waving in a slight breeze between the distant blue reflected in the pond. Meanwhile the girls proceeded to pick flowers and giggle off behind him. He began happily strumming a tune using the chords that Helen's father had taught him. He sang, "When I was a lad and Old Shep was a pup, over hills and meadows we'd stray," but Julie interrupted his singing.

"Play *We Shall Overcome*, Ray."

So he began again and the girls sang enthusiastically behind him.

Then Helen interrupted her singing to say, "Look, Ray!"

He had turned as he strummed to see both Helen and Julie swaying to the music with all their clothes off, flowers poked into their hair and leis hung around their necks. They both had flowers threaded through pubic hair. Helen's didn't contain many; her pubescence was too thin, fuzzy, and light. Julie had a veritable garden planted in her dark triangular divot.

Helen's supple breasts were nearly fully formed then, as Ray had sensed they must have been, from changes in the contours of her sweaters over the last months. They were still immaturely conical, their firmness supporting a beautifully firm and rhythmic bounce close to her lithe body as she danced. Harder central buds were still apparent promising further development.

Julie on the other hand already had smooth pendulous breasts that gyrated in a sort of wild sexuality, nothing short of pornographic, as had already been defined by the Supreme Court of the United States of America in direct reference to Ray's immediately aroused "prurient interest," he was now sure. He felt their definition poignantly.

Julie's difference was more than the two or three years she was older than Helen and Ray. Both Ray and Helen were sure she would eventually become what they would come to refer to as the Venus of Willendorf after the prehistoric fertility statuette. She was definitely already role-playing as heiress apparent of Mother Earth.

Rather than him *overcoming* as he had hummed, right along with the girls that he would, Ray found himself now totally overcome by these sights instead. Puberty seemed to have arisen in him like a mushroom capable of pushing through inches of blacktop pavement. That brief transition from childhood

having been replaced innocence without a trace, full manhood having commandeered his body, his entire being. If there is a time when a boy becomes a man, that day had been it for Ray.

"Helen, what are you doing?" he had yelled, and it seemed to him that the squeak in his voice had changed suddenly also into the much lower booming masculine tone that it had had ever since.

"Getting free from the constraints of civilization," she exclaimed sweetly, naively.

Ray had stared in a rapt state; this was the first he had seen Helen's naked body since early preschool doctor playing, and he had never even imagined anything as magnificent as Julie's.

"It's okay, Ray. This is how we were born and it's how we'll die. Take your clothes off too, it's fun," Helen had insisted. But he hadn't.

"Well, keep playing the guitar at least. Don't stop," Julie said

So he tried to keep strumming while watching the two of them continue to sing and dance sensuously. Ray had indeed been overcome with lust, but he tried to hide that shameful fact, the anatomical betrayal hidden by the guitar, a good purpose for it now as Julie had suggested it would be. Helen had come over to sit next to him on the same boulder and although the guitar hid his lustful bulge, the urge to reach out and touch those pink bulges around Helen's nipples became a consuming ache.

Helen's sexual arousal shone through bright cheeks. "Isn't Julie's body pretty?" she asked in pleading projection. Under the waterfall now, Julie was a frolicking sylvan siren whose sexual appeal Ray could certainly not deny. Petals bounced on ripples all around her now.

"You mean sexual," Ray clarified, trying to laugh.

Julie had heard him and insouciantly waded over to where they sat, shaking the water from her hair, a process exhibiting the tremendous swath of her hips and breasts. As she splashed along, wading toward them, water and blossoms dripped from tufts in her deflowered pubic area that bounced with each drip. She struck a most provocative frontal pose then, her hips thrust forward, fingers exposing a damp redolence of under mushroom pink that unavoidably appealed to Ray's newly aroused male senses.

"Now let me show you how to make love, Helen; it's really fun," she said. She jerked the guitar from Ray's grasp as she clamored out of the pond. Cool drips titillated Ray's face. Julie dropped the instrument disrespectfully beside him with a discordant clang, then proceeded to straddle his legs with much more dexterity than she had demonstrated in mounting Trooper. Having quickly undone his belt, she unbuttoned the top button of his fly, unzipped it, and with a calm competence that Ray could only behold in awe, slid a cool damp hand down into his shorts, down to parts of him she seemed to know much better than he did.

He sat there in amazement, breathless. Her burgeoning breasts that were now so totally *free of civilization* moistened his face with cool pond water.

They bewildered his whole being. Great progress had been made in freeing Ray, body and mind, of any vestige of *civilized restraints*. He wanted her.

"Wow!" Julie said reaching his genitals, his penis now firmly in her grasp, "He's massively *hard*."

But then it all stopped. Civilization collapsed back over the evolutionary biological past with Helen's high-pitched scream. "No!" she had squealed. She was in tears yelling and pushing in that notably selfish, uncivilized, and irrational manner so essential to the perpetuation of civilization: "Ray's mine," she half screamed, half cried. "He's *mine*!"

Julie seemed only mildly dismayed, primarily Ray thought because he was no longer as hard as he had been. "Helen!" Julie yelled back, "He *has* to learn! They're not any good the first time anyway. He has to learn how to make it pleasurable for the woman too. Somebody has to teach him. I'll do it; I know how."

"I'll teach him myself," Helen declared, pushing Julie spitefully to get her off him, "when I'm ready!"

Ray was stunned looking from one set of breasts to the other as they determined whose object he was. He wondered why, as he remembered it now, it was primarily their breasts and not their faces he remembered. For one thing, those were a lot closer to him, he rationalized. But he had no recollection of the expressions on their faces as they fought, only the swishing of breasts about his face, one pair pointed, tipped with the prettiest tiny pink blossoms, the other pair ripe succulent fruit. Thus, Ray supposed, they had each one of them become no more than an object for the others.

The pert little pink, eraser-tipped nipples won. He remembered being glad that it was they who had won this war of his world.

"In a commune there is no 'I'," Julie said sanctimoniously from her position lying on her back on dirty pebbles and sandy mud at the edge of the pool, "just 'we'. It's 'we' who shall overcome, Helen, not 'I'."

"There isn't going to be a commune here!" Helen pouted with a shout. "This is Ray's and my *private place*. You have defiled it," she exclaimed concerning what was now declared to have been their sacrosanct holy place.

Ray had got up with his back turned to them. He had Helen's future straight A pupil back in detention. Upon turning back toward them, he picked up the dishonored guitar and headed back down the trail on foot.

"Put Trooper away when you get back, Helen," was all he had said.

Such an educational opportunity would not present itself to Ray again for several years. Helen had chosen to defer her responsibility of *teaching* him herself. But after much yearning for initiation, he would eventually become a very good student according to his instructor. But certainly not that first time, that night after homecoming three years later. Julie had been right about that; he wasn't any good that first time.

Now these thirty some years later, he saw Helen watching his face. She had a cute smile, because she knew exactly what he had just relived in his

mind, and how far he would have gotten with it. "You've never recovered from that lesson, have you, Ray?"

"Nope," he said, "That was like an electric shock treatment. I've been afraid of hearing the squeal as you abandoned your quest to 'free yourself from the constraints of civilization'." Both their eyes stared off at the ceiling then, thinking back, embarrassed smiles lighting both their faces.

"You've been terrified to get too near forbidden fruit since then, I'll bet. But evidently it's just the heart of that fruit that still terrifies you, isn't it, Ray?" Helen teased rather crudely, he thought, breaking their reverie. "You like the look and feel of melons and apricots, don't you?" She laughed at him cruelly, he thought. Why?

His strange sense of sexual decorum, she perceived (correctly, he knew) had all derived from that one vivid experience. "A repeatable experiment once again confirmed, even on Sir Pavlov," she chuckled.

"I suppose it is just the act itself, but that's how you conditioned me." It was an extreme embarrassment for Ray to think about his recent experience, that conditioning having been thoroughly tested by Lesa. That seemed as long ago now as his teens. "I'd probably hear you screaming," he said, the 'probably' was understated and his ultimate violation of conditioning omitted.

They both laughed, although Ray awkwardly, since the joke was on him, and it wasn't really funny".

After a bit Ray asked, "But what were the 'treats' you and Julie promised me? Certainly not that green apple. Wasn't it the sex?"

Helen looked a little confused remembering. "No, I think it was colored packages containing prophylactics. I remember admiring those little red and blue packages, not really thinking about what they were. I don't know if Julie forgot them, since there were some in that little bag, or if she hadn't intended to use them on your first lesson." Helen smiled, thinking about it. "I can't imagine that though. She knew she had to be careful. She was smart – too smart, I suppose, poor Julie. You know, Ray, when I heard on that first Larry King Live show that Lesa had emphasized to you that her name was not Julie, it became so easy for me to not be jealous of her. Pretty silly of me, huh."

"I suppose I should have jumped to the conclusion that her name was Helen," Ray admitted with both their heads nodding in cheerful agreement, "instead of Lesa ... except for blue eyes." They let that strand of thinking go.

"You held off on my continuing education quite a while though, didn't you? You said you were going to teach me yourself, but you waited long enough. And no colored packages for you; you didn't want me to open one, remember."

"I did wait a long time, didn't I," she said, laughing softly for his pleasure, but a little awkwardly, he thought. "We should have used a condom, huh?" She closed her eyes and was soon asleep and dreaming again.

Ray continued thinking of poor maligned Julie. She and her 'pimply ass' boy friends were not all bad, Ray knew. They were intellectually, as well as sexually, mature, progressive. There had been an intellectual vitality about

them all, a passion that was characteristic of the times. It was associated with a wonderfully naive optimism that had somehow completely vanished from the American scene thereafter. Besides a youthful impertinence, the idiocy of hormonally driven communal love, beads, and flowers, there was a sense of restoration of a true grass roots democracy deplorably absent since then.

It had been Julie who had shaped Helen's drive for helping democracy survive the materialism that the United States has embraced. It had in more recent times charged her concern about corporate greed, belligerence of the religious right's self-righteousness that has particularly enveloped the US since the theft of Election 2000. Julie – with all her clothes on – although always excluding the traditional brassiere (maybe they didn't make them that big Ray amused himself with thinking), had introduced both Helen and Ray to Charles Reich's *The Greening of America*. That book had totally convinced Ray, even if it had not had the effect of activating his political passions as it had Helen's. He had memorized those first paragraphs of Reich's book primarily to impress Helen (and, of course, Julie) and had frequently quoted those passages over the years for her enjoyment. But he liked them too. He bought into the rhetoric.

Helen was awake again and smiling at him. "Julie is a nice person."

"Oh, I know she is, Helen. Smart too, but you said, 'too smart'? Can anyone be too smart?"

"No, not *too* smart. She may not have taught us how to make love," to which comment they both smiled, "like she wanted to, but she portrayed a vision of America that affected both our expectations, even if American politicians have let us down in that regard. It was from her that I got my passion for politics," Helen said. She was exhausting herself. "Quote the start of *Greening of America* to me again, Ray. You still remember it don't you?"

"Yeah." So he began:

"America is dealing in death, not only to people in other lands, but to its own people. So say the most passionate of our youth, from California to Connecticut... We think of ourselves as an incredibly rich country, but we are beginning to realize that we are a desperately poor country – poor in most of the things that throughout the history of mankind have been cherished as riches."

"There is a revolution coming. It will not be like revolutions of the past. It will originate with the individual and with culture, and it will change the political structure only as its final act. It will not require violence to succeed, and it cannot be successfully resisted by violence. It is now spreading with amazing rapidity, and already our laws, institutions and social structure are changing in consequence. It promises a higher reason, a more human community, and a new and liberated individual. Its ultimate creation will be a new and enduring wholeness and beauty – a renewed relationship of man to himself, to other men, to society, to nature, and to the land."

"This is the revolution of the new generation... It is both necessary and inevitable, and in time it will include not only youth, but all people in America."

"I have tried so hard my whole life to make that peaceful revolution of liberalism a reality, Ray. I feel an overwhelming sadness that the idealism of those years of our youth has dulled into abject acquiescence of fascism, totalitarianism, and other strange shenanigans of the current administration and Corporate State that keeps this kind of greedy politics in power."

"Helen, you need to slow up a little," Ray cautioned.

"It's been my life, Ray, my very life." There were tears in her eyes.

"After all these years we are much worse off than we ever were before. Eisenhower is now viewed as having been a liberal; isn't that unbelievable? The constitution has been ransacked, there is virtually no free press, there are many times more lobbyists hired to pay out bribes than there are elected officials to accept them. Billions of dollars every year, Ray, just for the license to steal from the American people."

"Helen! It's me you're talking to. Ray. I've heard it before. I believe it," he said stopping her.

"I know you do, Ray. I'm sorry. I'm a Nader Raider at heart, aren't I?"

"You are. Don't be sorry," he said. "I just don't like seeing you waste your energy. Would you like me to quote some more?" he asked her then.

She nodded her head, "Yes, would you, Ray? It seems like maybe as long as someone remembers the dream and repeats it, even to the ones who embrace that dream, that it might yet happen."

"I know it bothers you that the tax burden is lowered on the wealthy while spending billions of dollars on war machinery rather than libraries and the like. It bothers me too even if we happen to have become some of the wealthy." Then he quoted Reich:

"...This is only half their message. The other half – just as real as if it were spread in full page newspaper ads.... – is this: 'Don't spend money on city schools, on hospitals, on the poor.' 'Ignore the pressing needs of society...'"

"Oh, Ray!" she interrupted. "I wish I could have made a difference. That despicable hatred of liberal causes, those conservative 'demands' to ignore decency are all sugar coated, demanding that we: 'Vote against big government and bureaucrats in Washington D.C. who want to spend *our* money on entitlements. Vote for privatization.' That's what evil conservative politicians tell us, to entitle corporate executives of Halliburton, Amazon, Enron, Anderson, Harkan, Apple, Exxon, Pfizer, Humana, Blackwater, et cetera, to minimize tax obligations – as though for *us*. Ignore the poor is what we are really saying if we applaud tax breaks. This way no one needs to feel bad."

Ray was used to hearing her expositions and usually actually enjoyed hearing her wax eloquent, but he didn't like her wasting so much of her precious energy now. "Shouldn't you rest now Helen? Please rest."

"Not yet," she said becoming worked up.

"This kind of propaganda makes the unthinking believe that by voting for privatization they are voting against corruption, when in fact the opposite is the case. The electorate can't remove psychopathic CEOs. They are totally out of control. All the money you have made us is a drop in a bucket of what is needed to fight back, but isn't there some way? Will you think about it after I'm gone, Ray?" She was clearly getting weary again, starting to doze even while straining not to.

"I will," he said deeply moved again by the passion this exhausted woman could still put into trying to make the world a better place, rather than just watching and describing its physical behavior as he had.

Here he realized was the primary instance of where he had failed to take proper interest in the work of someone he loved. She had deserved so much more from him than toleration. He could have helped her. He would indeed think about possible ways to help get Helen's message across.

#12 *Being Whisked Away*

Into this background of happy and unhappy reminiscences of the 'good ole' youthful days of romantic attachments and idealism, Eddie came up to visit. While he was with them, in addition to spending time with Helen while Ray shopped and caught up on chores, he talked to Ray about his department at Stanford where he was completing his Ph.D. Ray enjoyed that aspect of their conversations. Eddie hadn't talked much about his academic interests or progress with Ray before.

Less enjoyably, it seemed that the physics department would like it if Ray would come down to make a presentation on the *Origins of Irreversibility* for the physics department on a Friday evening. Eddie said that his and Lesa's work was becoming more and more mainstream. The department would like to get his in-person presentation of the work and for him to be available for some questions.

"We can make a weekend of it," Eddie said, "and then on Monday afternoon there'd be a symposium on relativity in which they would like you to discuss your alternative to Einstein's time dilation concept. I think you'd get a good audience; there's a lot of interest in that down there on *the farm*. You're somewhat of an icon.

"Anyway, Pop, you need to get away from here once in a while. You'll be better company for Mom when you come back." Eddie said he had arranged with Allie to stay with their mother every minute while Ray was away.

"I can't leave, Eddie. Your mother needs me; we have promised each other that I won't leave her until the end."

"That's not what Mom told me," Eddie said, but they let it go.

Finally, in mid-September, Helen called Ray into her room one day when Allie was there talking with her. "Ray, you said I could call the shots; you will make them happen, right?"

"That's right," Ray said, looking at Allie who watched attentively. "What is it Helen?"

"You go to Stanford tomorrow."

Ray looked at her with his brows deeply furrowed. After a pause he said, "That's not your shot, Helen. That's mine! Anyway, tomorrow's Thursday.

Eddie said the arrangement, if it happened at all, would be on a Friday. They'd have to plan for it. I can't just show up."

"Ray, just do it!" she said wearily, shaking her head with some contempt, he thought. "It's my shot, Ray. Make it happen."

Allie nudged Ray's arm. "Eddie's got it all set up."

Ray looked from Allie to Helen questioningly. He kissed her and said, "Okay, Helen, but I sure don't want to leave you. You said that I could suspend my life for you, that you'd let me. Please don't do this anymore. I'm fine."

"You *will be* suspending your life for me," she said. "Get packing." She smiled at him, feigning a toughness he knew she didn't have, but at least letting him know how much this was indeed something she wanted him to do.

Ray called Eddie to tell him of this development. "Would it work?"

"It works perfectly," Eddie said. "Allie told me that this would be a good week for her, so I set it up."

Ray's tickets had been purchased in advance, he found out. Allie had set it all up. One more woman commandeering his life, he thought.

Next day Tom brought Allie and was there to take him to the airport. There were the usual airport hassles but eventually he was on a plane headed south to San Jose. He flew first class again and was able to relax. His father would not have approved a healthy man flying first class. Ray smiled. Adam Bonn would not have approved him deferring to a wife's opinion either... let alone Helen's.

Adam Bonn would now be considered psychologically abusive, Ray knew. He could scare the hell out of a grown man thirty years after his death, Ray thought. But in actuality, Helen also was not of the opinion that there should be an elite class that enjoys special privileges just because they happen to possess a little wealth, all too frequently illegitimately, or because of a lucky windfall, as he knew his situation would have to be categorized.

Thinking about his father again then – a topic he and Helen would probably not get into – Ray wondered just how much Adam had actually had to do with the Canyon Creek dam going in. To what extent had he just been a pawn to whom it was conveniently attributed by the power companies and accepted readily by the Canyon Creek residents? Once the idea of the dam was out there, could Adam Bonn have averted that eventuality even if he had wanted to? Ray doubted it now; at most he could have joined the unsuccessful protests. The location was too ideal for a dam.

Adam had not had credentials or experience enough to have called shots at a very high level for that particular power company, although he definitely had done the technical groundwork and promoted the development. Virtually everyone from up the Creek had hated him; that much was certain. And why? He had been considered to have 'fouled his own nest'. Helen had thought that... probably still did... and had been the first to use that phrasing publicly. Ray too had accepted the validity of the accusation, he admitted, after a moment's consideration.

Helen had taken part in the demonstrations protesting the progress on the dam. She had screamed at Ray's father for his refusing to listen to opinions of anyone else, for which incident neither had ever forgiven the other. Ray realized that largely because of that he himself had never forgiven his father... not even yet. Ray's mother had left her husband, or rather, kicked him out of the house, because of that. But Adam Bonn had sullenly plunged on with an indomitable spirit.

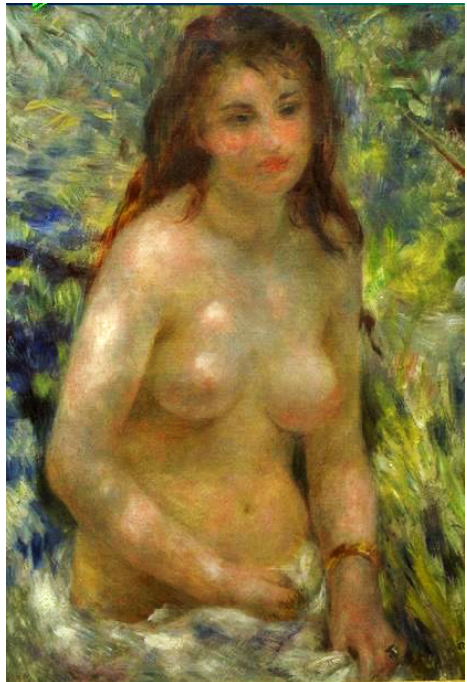
Then later Ray and Helen and Allie had stayed with Ray's mother up on the ridge those summers between terms at the university. The townspeople's homes had been bought out whether they wanted to sell them or not – eminent domain. Even the cemetery had been moved amid a hullabaloo. Houses up on the canyon rim had been built for those who wanted to stay in the vicinity. Ray had worked to build those houses during his summers, becoming a journeyman carpenter in the process. His father had gotten him on as an apprentice during his summers in high school. That work had then allowed him to stay in school and take care of his growing family while the settlement was pending. Ray had even helped build a new Canyon Creek High School up on the ridge. It had later been turned into a Senior Center.

There was no longer anyone living up on the ridge that had lived in Canyon Creek before the dam. Retired people who had resettled from California or the East Coast lived there who enjoyed the dam reservoir as a lake with no sense of the deluge and a paradise lost. Those who had lived in the little town of Canyon Creek itself, and were still alive, lived down the river in one of the other towns in the Skagit valley and still hated Adam Bonn long after his death.

Those were depressing thoughts. Ray reached for the airline magazine in front of him and began thumbing through it, scanning an article here and there until he came to an article on the impressionists. There was an image included of a *Study for Nude in Sunlight* by Renoir. The image suddenly brought with it other memories of his teenage years in Canyon Creek.

Ray and Helen had been fifteen – about to turn sixteen – when Helen had turned rebellious that second summer Julie had come up.

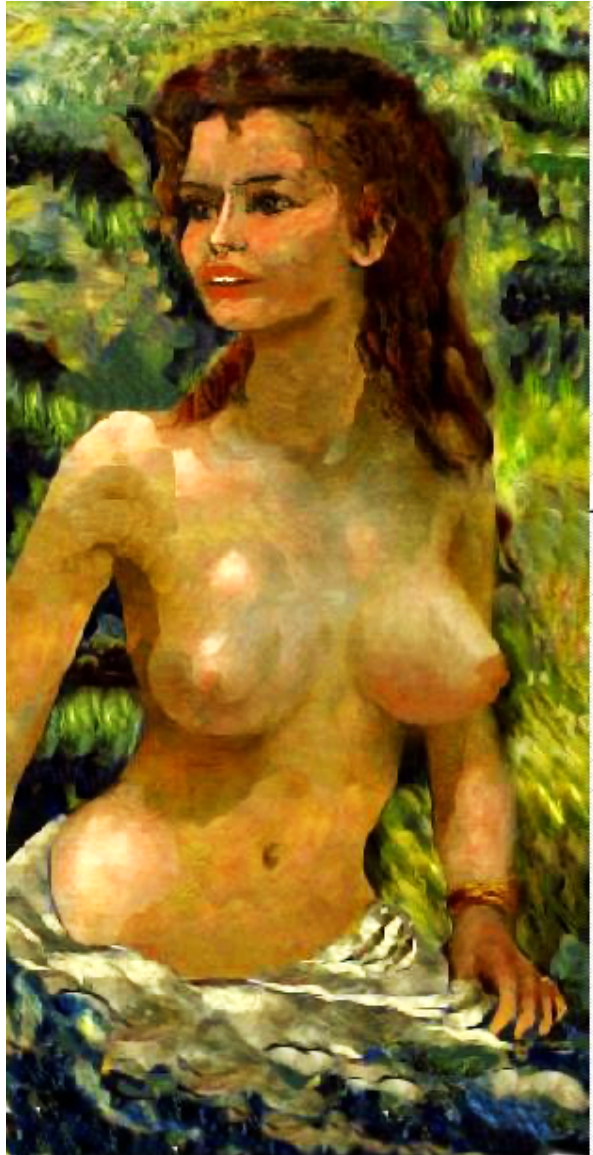
Ray returned to his most vivid memories of Julie from the time, more than a year earlier at the waterfall on the canyon wall... Julie who 'defiled' his and Helen's private place... her with water dripping off



What he had perceived as huge breasts. The ice-cold chill of the spring water produced goose bumps in a ring around Julie's nipples. Ray would learn by looking it up that they were called 'Montgomery's tubercles', hers had been exquisitely symmetric coronets on the brownish lavender, eggshell blush of here dark areolas. He had craved a more tactile understanding to complete the interrupted visual titillation. Ray had not gotten over that incident in years, maybe he never had, never would. He saw them now. He looked down at Renoir's Study for Nude in Sunlight again, but it had changed in his mind to a much more voluptuous woman much more like Julie had appeared that summer up at their private pool on the canyon wall.

He was embarrassed about the extent to which many subsequent sexual fantasies had embellished those key features of Julie's anatomy. But by God, she *was* beautiful, Ray argued with himself even now as some sort of justification for diverted thoughts past and present. Despite his intimate life-long relationship with his Helen whom somehow he had sainted above such carnal imaginings back then. Ray had not been able to think of her in similar terms until she had finally *educated* him beyond mere fantasies of naughtiness.

That second time Julie had come up, Jonesy had irritated Ray yet again by boasting his exploits with Julie. These accounts were discounted by Ray as him having more likely been Julie's exploitation but Jonesy had provided what Ray would need to know about purchasing the 'red and blue packages' he and Helen hadn't used and



didn't need. Those useful promised *treats* that Helen would opt to dispense with, ignoring Julie's expertise. Those were the 'distractions' which Helen would dismiss on Homecoming night – perhaps to further reduce imposed 'constraints of civilization' against which she had begun actively demonstrating on a regular basis. His reveries with Helen had evidently gotten him off on sexual memories consciously addressed in years.

Looking out into the crescent sunset from 30,000 feet, Ray wondered now why after all these years that these were the poignant memories of his youth. It reminded him of a disconsolate *Faust*, of whom he had read during those angry days of discontent at the Sheltry Hotel in the Big Apple, now also so long ago. And Lesa. Faust had reviled Mephistopheles for not appreciating pubescent urges, that might, in fact, have been the noblest signals of a human heart, but was reminded by that very devil, 'What's not to understand?' So, now he let the devil do the honors of expressing what had always been so easy for Ray to commit to memory, somehow so difficult for him to phrase as just what he felt personally. Memorized quotations played out for his appreciation and whether of Helen, Julie, or Lesa of whom he had not allowed himself to think, he could not have said.

*"This displeases you? 'For shame!'
You are forsooth entitled to exclaim;
We to chaste ears it seems must not pronounce
What, nathless, the chaste heart cannot renounce.
Well, to be brief, the joy as fit occasions rise,
I grudge you not, of specious lies.
But long this mood thou'lt not retain.
Already thou'rt again outworn,
And should this last, thou wilt be torn
By frenzy or remorse and pain.
Enough of this! Thy true love dwells apart,
And all to her seems flat and tame;
Alone thine image fills her heart,
She loves thee with an all-devouring flame.*

He could not put the memories back where they belonged... It had been way too long a time before Helen would engage with Ray in anything explicitly sexual after that incident at their 'secret place'. He had pushed her, trying to make her jealous, he supposed. Well, yes, he had done that, asking Marsha Miller to the prom their senior year. That was what that had all been about, why Helen had gone out with Jonesy that once, and then, somewhat thereafter given Ray *the lesson*. Julie had loyally honored Helen's sanction on all her subsequent visits. Ray was clearly off limits for her.

Helen too had been profoundly affected by that incident, of course. Although apparently it was more with inhibitions of one sort and motivations of another, Ray thought, than with lingering after-images that had so affected

him. She never again asked to ride up with Ray to where they had formerly talked about everything pre-teens talk about in their secret place with topics most pre-teens would never have had to face. It had never struck Ray so directly that their 'sacred place' was a creation that had required them to build their own scale model dam if they were to have the pool they loved. Their leaving the paradise they had created seemed to have been a silent consent. There were obviously major changes occurring in Helen's mind and body, of which Ray was no longer informed, so he watched the signs and followed at a distance. His own mind and body transitioning as well.

He noticed when she began reading what would become the classic *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson. He purchased his own copy, and although he read more with a view to discover reasons for a different sort of silence, he too was profoundly affected by the message. He wondered to what extent Helen would skip over the chemical descriptions, knowing she was not very interested in the sciences. Ray became aware of health dangers of arsenic while reading this book even though it was not the main message portrayed. He was aware of the arsenic being leached out of the slag that was dumped at the edge of the creek up by the mine in which his father had been employed. He realized, and he was sure Helen would also, that Adam Bonn was associated with that hazard. Ray had noticed that when he brought fish that he had caught over to Helen's mother when he ate suppers with them, Helen no longer ate fish. She was and would continue for some years to be vegetarian.

It had been at their 'secret place' sitting on boulders at the rim of their own aquamarine dam project that two children, whose mothers had denominated them the 'only-child twins', had first addressed the coming of the deluge planned by Ray's father. It had been here, and through Helen's eyes that Ray would first get a glimpse beyond utilitarian technological genius of how extremely profound the tragedy awaiting the inhabitants of the valley.

It was a horrified shock that Ray witnessed on Helen's face when he told her what he had been doing on the trips he was taking around the canyon to help his father. She had burst into a tearful outrage and had grabbed him in an embrace that seemed appropriate to the deluge being immediately upon them, exclaiming, "Oh, Ray!" He felt a child's terror then and thereafter from Helen's perspective, his father's joy of accomplishment never succeeding to alleviate the horrible sense of loss of his and Helen's birthright. Sometimes thereafter it would be to their secret place that they would flee to share despairing nightmares that would plague them both for years to come.

Much later, when Julie appeared in that seventeenth year of the only-child twins, she and Helen had demonstrated quite other facets of sensual vitality in protesting the coming of the dam. Julie's imported hippie friends in their VW bus with its painted hieroglyphics did not go home this time, and virtually all Helen's classmates except for Ray, whose father was, of course, a primary focus of the protests, had joined the movement.

Many emerging Northwest environmental groups supported some of the scheduled occasions to protest the dam as well. Ray didn't think Helen had

ever exhibited anything very private like some of the girls had in those protests, other than her exposed vocal cords and explicitly elaborate "Damn the dam!" signs. She really wasn't an exhibitionist, no matter how loudly she yelled. Julie hadn't flaunted her body either, perhaps in solidarity with Helen.

Ray realized now for the first time as he thought about it that even at that young age Helen had been the driving force behind those demonstrations. He believed now she had been responsible for all the organization and scheduling of the protests; she would hide paperwork whenever Ray was in her house.

She had known without discussion that Ray could not be involved, and Ray had known that Helen had to be. Each was who they separately *were* despite always being together as the only-child twins. As Ray thought about it now, more than thirty years later, it dawned on him that Helen still was an organizer for liberal causes. The candidates she 'supported' had probably, in fact, been selected and put in place by her contrivances. She was always busy on her computer and he never actually looked at what she was doing, where she went for her various meetings. Ray, the 'magnificent tolerator'.

Life in the little town of Canyon Creek had gone on more or less unaltered, despite evident progress on the dam and the bitterness of the protests, until near the end, a couple of years after Ray and Helen had graduated. The coming of the end had always been on everyone's mind though, all through Helen's and his teenage years. The size of the town dwindled that last few years. Their senior year the high school was half the size it had been when he and Helen had been freshmen.

The protesters had been a spent force long before water finally rose up over the remains of the little town where Ray was conceived... where Helen was conceived... where Allie was conceived... where all their parents except for the outsider, Adam Bonn, had been conceived.

Adam Bonn was gone by then too, killed by a fall from the top of the dam, *his* dam. He had fallen a hundred feet and bounced along the concrete spillway... before there was water to spill or to break such a fall... onto the rocks below and into the creek that was actually a river, to float on down several miles before his mutilated body would finally be recovered.

Ray's mother, Helen Bonn, was gone too... drowned on her way down the canyon wall to the vicinity of where the back yard of their old home had been but was now a hundred feet under water. She had been in the Chevy pickup Adam Bonn had driven up Canyon Creek when he had first had his epiphany of a dam at the Riparian Menhirs. She had kept it for some reason.

Ray's mother had taken the switchback along the reservoir too fast on her way down to help Helen's mother, who must have thought that she was having a stroke and had called her. Since Ray's mother didn't make it, Helen's mother Alice, hadn't either.

It was a hard turn. Ray remembered when they had built that road back before there had been any work done on the dam. The towns' people had no idea why they would put the road up so high and create such a hairpin curve. It would have been so much easier to build the road on that narrow shelf where

the old logging road had been, halfway down the canyon wall, that included Ray and his only-child twin, Helen's private place, their 'sanctuary'. But after the reservoir was filled, the road was right where it had had to be, a very few feet above the water line.

Ray remembered the switchback being directly above the barn he had built for Trooper back before he had done apprentice carpentry every summer and had decided to sell Trooper, for which Helen had given him so much grief. (She had not ridden Trooper in over a year before he had sold him, but still she insisted it had been a betrayal. He guessed now that it must have been the memories.) The ledge was very narrow up above there from rockslides.

When his mother had come up missing it had been Ray who saw where a vehicle had gone through the guardrail with the brown paint the color of the old Chevy. Divers had recovered her body.

By then Helen's mother had been found. She had died from the stroke without help, sprawled out on the kitchen floor with her phone hanging off the hook.

Helen had become alarmed that her mother's phone would be busy for so long, so she and Ray had driven up from Seattle to check. Their mothers, the two great friends, had a synchronized funeral. Their two orphaned only-child twins, two grandchildren and Alice's niece Julie the only remaining family of record, were all who were in attendance.

"Would you like more coffee, Sir?" It was the stewardess.

He turned away from the window through which he had watched the sky turn from an expansive view of distant Cascade foothills to an opaque darkness like looking through deep water.

"No, thanks." He handed her back an empty cup.

"You're Ray Bonn, aren't you?" she said then in surprise.

It was as though he had been sounding the deep. He tried for something to say and then, "Yes, I guess maybe I still am."

She laughed much louder than he thought she should have. He had not intended it to be funny. He did not feel any humor.

"Could I have your signature?" she asked then excitedly, to which he said abstractedly, "On what?"

"Anywhere," she said good-naturedly. "Where would you like to put it?" She spread her arms as though he could write on her anywhere.

Ray gave her a truly puzzled look. Would he 'like' to put his signature anywhere? He didn't really think so, but there was the gong for the beginning of their descent. Saved by the bell, he thought.

She laughed at his befuddlement and prolonged silence, then to terminate the lapse, hurried off to stash his cup in the garbage and find a copy of *Origins of Irreversibility* from somewhere among her things or someone else's, most probably someone else's.

What on earth would an airhead like her be doing with such a book, Ray wondered, when she had returned with it?

"What's your name?" Ray asked unceremoniously.

She pointed coyly to the promontory upon which the name was so prominently displayed on the badge of the lower corporate echelon.

"Duh," he said to her pleasure forcing a more personable approach.

"Diane,

"Thanks for the service on this flight and for flattering me by asking for my signature. Perhaps I flatter my co-author and myself in thinking this book worth reading. Good luck with it.

"Ray"

Diane was pleased as adequately expressed by twinkling her, just now lip-glossed, smile. Thankfully she had to take her seat immediately, and then in no time they were there, but not before Ray wondered about his mental meanderings. He had gone years without such thoughts – such doubts, self-doubts. Helen had seemed to have opened Pandora's box, and he didn't really like it open, but hadn't seemed to be able to shut it.

Then the jerk to a full stop, unfastening of seat belts, isles full of people too impatient to wait to get their overhead luggage, and thus to stand awkwardly waiting for doors to open. Ray sat.

#13 A few Days on the Farm

Eddie and Lisa met his plane. Ray felt very tired... "an old man," he told them, and they could see it, even in the fact of his saying it.

They went out to eat directly after getting his bags. There were university students at the restaurant; some were obvious about recognizing him. "Oh shit, Eddie, I forgot my sunglasses."

"And your white cane, too," Lisa said. "They won't hurt anything."

Ray grabbed the now outdated and dog-eared second edition copy of *Aberrations of Relativity* that was handed to him expectantly.

It opened onto the page with the reprinted version of his note to Lesa. He realized that he had not talked to her in person since he had dropped her off at Portland. He had not told her about Helen, although they had e-mailed to discuss the Mariners' desire to have him on the playoff roster again, which he had agreed to allow rather than have to discuss why not. He read now what he had written so long ago over slowly and then turned the page to sign.

"What's your name?" he asked the requester.

"My name's not Lesa," she said smiling. "I'm sorry."

He looked up into a charmingly freckled face, somewhat amused. "No, you're definitely not. Does that mean it's Julie then? I'm not as coy as I once was."

"Yes, it is," she responded with delight. "Julie Thompson."

Ray was too jaded to be as charmed as he might have been a year ago. "Julie, why on earth would you like me to sign this book?"

"I love the book," she said, "I'm an under-grad physics student here at Stanford. I've read through it many times and it's a lot of the reason I'm in physics; it's been so helpful in understanding what relativity is about. I like the way you write. Your and Dr. Sorensen's book is outstanding too. We all think you'll get the Nobel Prize for that work. You should."

He turned away from her and wrote,

"Julie,

"I think there's a Nobel Prize awaiting whomever can sort out all the alternative conjectures concerning relativity. My own guess is that gravity doesn't belong in that hodge-podge by the way. Win the Nobel Prize, will you please.

"Thank you for asking for my signature. I needed this today.

He handed the closed book back to this latter-day Julie. She thanked him graciously and walked back to her table where envious friends all noisily read what he had written, sharing her delight.

Ray could tell that Lisa had read what he had read and written. Then after their dinner, she asked, "How *is* Lesa?"

"I don't know," he said. "I don't hardly think about her any more except that she had me sign a contract the other day. I haven't talked to her by phone in a couple of months."

Eddie grabbed the bill nervously. "If we're done, we should get out of here."

"Let me get it," Ray said.

"Not today, Pop. You're on the hook tomorrow afternoon."

It was invigorating to be with the Eddie Bonns. Ray had not realized how much strain he had been under and how relaxing it was to know that Helen was in good hands without him having to worry about her for a change. He guessed her forcing him to accept this offer was a good thing for both of them.

He thought the presentation on Friday had gone extremely well. Eddie confirmed that he had also thought so. Ray had never presented material to people who all understood what he was saying before. They asked questions that should actually have stimulated future investigations even for him, if he had been into it anymore.

The weekend itself was most relaxing other than Little Eddie being Little Eddie. Ray had several enjoyable conversations with Lisa. Occasionally she got a bit personal, he thought, such as asking what he thought he would do after Helen "passed".

She wouldn't 'pass', he had answered. He despised the use of such euphemisms. She would 'die', and what he would do then, he didn't know, and didn't want to think about it. He couldn't begin to contemplate what he would do without Helen. She had structured his life for him since they were tiny in such a way that he could handle it. The only way he *could* handle it. She knew what he could handle and fixed it so he could.

"You make it sound as though you had some severe handicap," Lisa said cheerfully.

"Yeah, well. Could we talk about something else?" he asked.

"Sure."

They did.

Ray called Helen a couple of times each day and each time she was cheery and seemed to have much more energy than she had seemed to have possessed when he had left. It was such that he began to think that maybe she really had needed to get his morbidity out of there for a bit. He knew now that it was a good break for him as well.

Once when he called, he thought he heard a couple of voices laughing in the background and asked who all was there. Helen said, "Oh, you know Allie." Would you like to talk to her? And whether he wanted it to or not, it happened.

Allie was cheerful with her 'Daddy', saying that she was very happy for an opportunity like this, but that her Mom was missing him.

The Monday presentation was a little different than the one had been on Friday, a considerably smaller audience and each attendee 'into' relativity. He explained in detail why the usual interpretation of energy level decay rates as constituting clock time dilation did not work. Most of those present had copies of *Aberrations of Relativity* opened to the pertinent sections. Ray followed the discussion as presented in his book but gave supplementary considerations he had gotten from discussions with Lesa, where he thought appropriate. Decay involved interactions between material entities with photon or other particle exchanges being involved. The temporal units were statistical. With which frame should the statistics be associated? How can statistics pertinent to a set of phenomena be relative? All this he related to the irreversibility problem addressed in the newer book, *Origins of Irreversibility*. He also went into the appearance of clocks from two perspectives describing associated antinomies, a diagram of which was in the book.

He purposely allowed a lengthy period of questions and answers at the end. That period was very enjoyable, with the discussions almost getting out of control occasionally with various members of the audience disagreeing vocally with each other. Edna Robinson's advice came to mind. Near the end of the time he saw that Julie whose book he had signed at the restaurant, stood up. He said, "Yes, Julie," which flustered her and others a bit. But everyone laughed.

Nervously she said, "You said you didn't think gravity belonged in the 'hodge-podge' of relativity. Could you explain what you meant?"

"Julie Thompson, didn't your mother ever teach you not to kiss and tell?" Everyone laughed uproariously but as soon as he had said it Ray knew it was very inappropriate, not the slightest bit funny, or at all nice. It was awful.

Julie rose again to say, "I am very sorry."

"Don't be. My response was terribly rude, I am so sorry. But I wrote that comment about gravity in your book to give you an advantage over all these other students." More laughter.

"Actually, I've had problems with gravity all my life. Anything that's ten to the minus fortieth the size of something else doesn't seem to me to be a prime mover, does it to you?"

More laughter.

"I had a friend at work who was into 'The Far Side' cartoons. Remember them? Anyway, he got me this postcard that I had on my wall at work until somebody stole it. It was this depiction of a bunch of pink pigs flying around over a green earth, and it read, 'the pigs that don't believe in gravity.' Clearly,

I was one of *them*. I still am. If an electron's charge can't warp space, then don't expect me to believe its mass can. After we got rid of action at a distance that I discussed in the article of the similar title in *Aberrations*, we had already accounted for the precession of the perihelion of Mercury's orbit. Read the article and think about it. That's just a tip from an old punter. There may be nothing to it."

"Thank you all," Ray said. "You've been a great audience and even better to interact with. You cannot imagine what a lift you have been to my spirits."

Then someone yelled out, "Aren't you going to sign our books?"

Eddie was there for him with Lisa and Little Eddie then and waited patiently as he signed way too many books.

"Were you there the whole time?" Ray asked Lisa. She held Little Eddie, who now reached out for Ray to take him, which he did.

"Yes, I was. I heard it all, and so did Little Eddie, and let me tell you, he was no little bit impressed with Grumps."

Julie came running down the steep aisle way to say, "Excuse me. I am so sorry, Dr. Bonn. But honestly, I'm really glad I asked."

"Me too, Julie. Figure it out for me, would you? It really bugs me. I think gravity is a residue of E and M." He paused briefly. "It's *Mr.* Bonn by the way, not doctor; I don't have a PhD. Didn't I sign your book as Ray?"

"Yes, yes you did," she said waving as they walked away. "Thanks Ray."

Both Eddies and Lisa had all their bags packed and, in the car, along with Ray's, he came to find out. They were going up to see Helen again on the same flight as Ray.

Tom picked them up at SeaTac and took them home. Ray had been gone four days.

Helen's beauty had seemed to sublimate through her illness into an ethereal beauty beyond substance. She seemed very happy. When he bent down to kiss her, there was a scent, undefinable at first, but wonderful to him that he had sensed upon entering the house. There had been an ever so subtle olfactory nuance, more pronounced on Helen's face.

It dawned on him all of a sudden then. He jerked up, quickly recovered composure, but underneath there was total chaos. Lesa had been there! It had been her voice he had heard laughing with Allie in the background of their phone conversation.

Ray turned toward the sliding door from the bedroom looking out toward the koi ponds. "How are my fish?" he asked and slid the door open to step out.

He walked down the path between ponds. The fish were colorful. Fountains gurgled. Lesa had strolled here, seen these same fish, heard the same fountains. He just stood there, feeling violated as he looked at the koi leisurely swimming about. Then Eddie was there by him.

"You okay, Pop?" Ray didn't answer. He just kept looking at the fish, wondering how Lesa would have looked at the fish, wondering how Ray would look at the fish, wondering... two lonely mirrors facing each other in a long

hallway with Helen between. A tear rolled down his cheek like the tear that would have rolled down Lesa's cheek.

"We did it for Mom, you know."

"Yeah."

"Everybody loves you, you know," Eddie said.

"Yeah." Ray was silent for a bit. "Love is hard to get right, Eddie."

"But when it's right, it's so good," Eddie said with kind of a chuckle.

Ray turned to look at Eddie, "You are an amazing son, Eddie."

"Thanks, Pop. You getting chilly yet?"

"Yeah." And the two of them meandered back to the sliding door and back into the bedroom.

That night as Ray climbed into bed with Helen, she said, "I thought it would be easier on you that way."

"It was," he said, "but I can't believe how stupid I am, Helen."

Helen lay on Ray's arm and he held her to him for a long while. It felt so good to be back with her again.

Well, the Mariners did it again. They won the West this year by closing out with four in a row against the Texas Rangers. Ray had been placed on the playoff roster in advance the same as the year before, but he no longer remembered the arrangement or cared. Ray didn't follow much of what had been or was now happening in baseball or anything or anywhere outside of Helen's bedroom during these months. Ray's excursion to Stanford to allow Helen, Lesa, and presumably Allie to do whatever such women do on such encounters for four days was the only break that Ray had had.

Allie was there a lot now and did most all of the shopping, but Jamie and Judy both took their turns at being very helpful as well. Tom and Stephanie must have been covering for Allie at home with no complaint ever getting as far as Ray's ears.

One day in late September Ray and Helen were sitting in their favorite overstuffed chairs when she said, "Ray?"

"Yes."

"Would you call Lesa?"

"You want to talk to her?"

"Yes," and then, "but I want you to talk to her too. She's going to be leaving pretty soon, you know." A pause, "But don't talk in front of me... not because of me, but because of you... you need your privacy."

Ray just stared at her without moving for a long time.

Finally, Helen broke the silence with, "You better do it now, it's late back there."

Anguished but obedient Ray got the phone and hit the number for Lesa's cell, handing the phone over to Helen. "Hi, Lesa. It's Helen... Oh, fine. How are you, Dear... Oh, don't be. You leave for London shortly don't you?"

Ray had forgotten that conference that she had wanted him to attend with her. Helen's comment reminded him.

"Oh yes," Helen continued, "I thought you and Ray needed to talk, which is really why I had Ray call for me. He has a hard time with it Lesa, but you can help."

Helen handed the phone across to Ray and motioned for him to leave.

"Hi," Ray said.

"Ray, I am so sorry," and there was sobbing at the other end.

Helen was teary-eyed and motioning feebly for Ray to get out of the room where she was laid back in an overstuffed chair, so he walked out and down the hallway. His steps were uneven.

"Are you there, Ray?" Lesa said between sobs.

"Yeah," he said finally.

"You didn't want me there, did you?"

"Lesa, I am a wreck of a man. I don't know what I wanted, and it doesn't matter *what* I wanted, because Helen clearly wanted you here. I don't know what *to* want anymore. I don't know anything except that when I stepped into the house, I got a whiff of your wonderful scent and realized how stupid I had been not to know what was going on. The whole situation breaks my God damned heart."

"Oh, Ray. Helen and I could have built that bridge. *We have* built a bridge over these troubled waters, Ray. You can walk across it any time you need to. Helen and I both understand. We love each other – and you."

"It takes time, Lesa. Did I tell you about vintage? Helen and I are the same age. Her dying after we've had all these years together is heart breaking, Lesa, and you think you want me afterward just to watch me fall apart three days later? You don't. I'm probably dying as we speak. It's vintage. You're new wine; it doesn't go in old bottles."

"The metaphor doesn't work, Ray. I'm the bottle and you're the wine; I've tasted it; it's wonderful. And anyway, it's biology, Ray, not theology." She sort of chuckled. "You have to get a grip on that."

He could hear the chuckle through her sobs; he didn't really like it.

"Anyway, Ray, listen to me. One possibility is that I will someday get to sit by your bedside with my heart breaking and watch you die before my very eyes, thinking about how much I love you and loved every minute of loving you and having dreamed of having one of those lovely children of yours, Ray. The other option is for me to shrivel up like a dried prune, a fucking dead end that never happened. Do you think I worry about your 'vintage' or 'mutual coherence', or 'telomeres' or any of the other crutches you have given me to try to keep me from caring? No, I fucking don't, Ray. I worry about whether you're ever going to see the other half of you staring you in the face. I keep hoping that you won't throw my life away along with yours. There's all this 'cultural overlap'..." she paused to emphasize, "there's another of your terms, Ray!" Then she continued "...and someday our bodies must do the spectacular interpenetration that our minds have already done. Helen gets that. Ask her. Add love to your list of terms, Ray. Don't forget love "

"Ask her *that*?" Ray repeated appalled.

"Yes, Ray. *Ask* her! You have been blessed with two women who love and understand you to the end of their universes and back again, and all you can do is quibble about which fucking universe you were born in and when it will crumble. They are forever, even if we aren't, Ray. They're universes for Christ's sake, all there is 'now and forever', remember? Just ask her, Ray. She's waiting for you to ask."

"She is? Okay, I will sometime," he answered lamely. Then there was silence at both ends.

Finally, in a different tone, "Ray. I have to get to London. Can we do the same contract for the World Series we did last year?"

"Okay," he said, not caring, not wanting to quibble. "I guess I can get Allie to watch Helen that long if it happens, but I'm not in very good shape. Good luck in London. I'm sorry I can't be with you, but you do understand, I guess." How lame could he sound?

"Yeah, I do understand this one, this time. I love you, Ray. Remember that. Do your exercises. Talk to Helen. Bye."

He didn't talk to Helen though. A little while after the phone call Helen sat at the table as Ray ate a little supper. She moved the little bits he had placed on her plate around and put a couple of very small bites up to her lips. Though she stared at him from the depths of the dying, he couldn't ask her what she and Lesa had talked about.

It was probably a week later as they were both still lying in bed one morning, both staring up at the ceiling that Ray asked her. "Do you want to tell me... what you and Lesa talked about?"

"I've wanted to for a long time."

He looked over at her, looking at him then with something like a smile. It was hard to tell any more, especially when she was lying down, sallow cheeks sagging, except that her eyes showed a very mild kindness. He did have difficulty reading faces sometimes anyway, even those of healthy people he knew well and loved.

"Ray, you need a woman."

"Of course, I need a woman. I need you, and you need me," he countered.

"The difference is," and she paused, "that I know it."

"I know it too. I have always known it. It's obvious."

"Of course it is, Ray, but when most people acknowledge that they need someone and love them, and by one miracle or another they get it all, smart people..." she paused for breath, "don't refuse the help."

Ray just stared at her without comprehension.

"I swear to the most holy God," another pause for breath, "that you are an emotional cripple, Ray Bonn." Another pause. "She's not Julie... and you're not fourteen."

"I know," was all he could say. He was devastated watching her. Then he said defiantly, "I know I'm not fourteen... but do you? If I ever recover from this, I will decide what I need. Right now I just need you. Only you."

"When you cried at the doctor's, I knew how deeply you cared. Sometimes tears are the only way of expressing things like that, Ray."

"I don't see you crying a lot," Ray said almost vindictively. Then he noticed a tear immediately begin to roll from her right eye across the bridge of her nose and into the other eye to join other tears proceeding like climbers descending down onto the pillow. His brow furrowed as he saw it. Was she acting?

"It's no act, Ray."

He realized that she knew what he was thinking, that she could read the shadows on his face like text. He willed his thinking to stop.

"Don't, Ray," she said, and he knew she knew that too.

Ray started to get up. "I love you, Helen, but I can't do this thing."

"Lie down, Ray. I'll tell you just what happened about Lesa coming here, because all you want to know are facts. So let's get the facts on the table first."

He looked at her questioningly.

"Yes," she said, "just like Lesa's mother did."

"Oh, God," he said and put his face in his hands. Her hand was on his arm gently tugging and he rolled back down with his head back on the pillow.

"We agreed that you could suspend your life to help me with everything but the 'Lesa thing', remember?"

"I remember," he mumbled bitterly.

"Well, I didn't know how to get rid of you long enough to get to know Lesa a little, so I explained the problem to Allie."

Ray groaned.

"She's all right with everything, Ray. The Stanford plan was her idea."

"Oh, God," Ray groaned again, embarrassed about having thought the Stanford staff had actually wanted him.

"Ray! It isn't as though there is anyone on earth who doesn't want to hear what you have to say on one topic or another! Eddie was thrilled with the opportunity. He said that no one did him any favors. Everyone was ecstatic that he had done *them* the favors! You evidently excelled again. And..." diverting the focus, "that Lisa of Eddie's is just marvelous isn't she, Ray?"

Ray nodded.

"So that worked pretty well, don't you think?"

"Yeah. I had a good time actually." He smiled.

"We set up the schedule for when it worked for Lesa so we'd have all four days together."

"When did she come and leave?"

"Tom picked her up right after he dropped you off. Her plane arrived a little before yours left. And her plane departed just after yours got in so Tom did double duty again." Ray wondered whether he shouldn't have gotten Lesa's scent in Tom and Allie's SUV. He had had strange thoughts he remembered.

"You must have planned that pretty carefully," Ray said.

"Lesa and Allie worked that all out."

That presented another incomprehensible image for Ray. Helen had sort of dozed for a moment due her weakness. But then she was awake again.

"She *is* lovely, Ray! I wanted to know how you could have fallen in love with her so quickly when you've been faithful all these years. I know how much you love each other."

There were tears in Ray's eyes now.

"Allie figured it out too, Ray. They are great friends. Lesa didn't tell Allie everything she told me, of course," with the necessary pause for breath here, "like your problem and solution down on the coast."

"Oh, God," Ray exclaimed. "How could she tell you that? There were no solutions. How could you listen?"

"We all love each other, Ray. That's all that matters, isn't it?"

He looked at the kind gentleness of this woman he had loved for so long. She was smiling at him through her weakness as she nodded off again. He forced himself to smile back.

Helen continued to get weaker and Allie and Judy increased their support.

#14 Big News Continues

It was October now. Lesa had gotten back from a very successful conference in London, where once again she had been awarded a 'best paper' award.

"*We*, Ray, *we* were awarded the best paper award," she insisted.

"Yeah, well..."

Then Ray received a call from the Nobel Committee that he and Lesa had been selected to receive the Nobel Prize in Physics for their work on discovering the origins of irreversibility. The announcement had been made by a Professor Gunnar Svenson, some secretary of the Royal Scandinavian Academy of Sciences. Could Ray please attend the festivities the first week in December. He would have to, wouldn't he? Then he thought about all the reasons that he couldn't but decided they wanted gratitude, not excuses, so he showed his extreme gratitude. He told Helen who was overjoyed for him. She had known what that award, more than any other single honor, would mean to him. "You better call Lesa," she said, but the phone rang right then. It was Lesa.

"Well, it's irreversible now isn't it, Lesa," Ray said. "We did it!"

"We did, didn't we Ray. I love you, Ray Bonn," she said.

"I do love you too, Lesa Sorensen, and thank you for being the essential ingredient to make this all happen."

They chatted on happily and then Helen wanted him to switch over to speaker phone so all three of them interacted with ease and most happily.

The election poles were continuing to favor Helen's candidates. That pleased her immensely. Several of the candidates and other political figures had visited Helen during her illness, never overstaying. And since Ray had gone in with them to speak with Helen and take care of anything Helen might need, he got more insight into what her activities had actually been over the last few years, what all she had been involved in. Political science had been her major at the university where she had excelled even with the two very young children most of her way through to graduation. It was something she loved. And these guests were dear friends, Ray could tell.

Even more joyous, however, was news from Judy that she and Jamie were expecting twins. Helen was overjoyed, but tearful that she would not live to see them. It seemed to bring to Helen's mind another reminiscence. "Do you remember when we were living up on the ridge with your mother? Allie was a baby and I was pregnant with Jamie."

"Yeah. I was getting a lot of overtime pay though, so I didn't see too much of any of you."

"No, you didn't," Helen said, "but I got to know your mother really well. She told me all kinds of family secrets," she said, smiling at Ray's apprehension. "This is a *good* secret, Ray. It involves Helen and my mom." She often spoke of Ray's mother as Helen even though that was also her own name, and excused it as, "Who could get confused? I wouldn't speak of myself in third person. You might. I wouldn't."

"They were pretty close always, weren't they?" Ray said.

"Yes, but you have no idea *how* close. Helen told me that summer that she and Mom had been such good friends for so long and were together so much of the time while their husbands worked that their periods had seemed to synchronize. That sort of thing occurs in convents sometimes. I've read about it since then. It's a pheromone thing, you know."

Ray knew that. He nodded, suggesting with his eyes that it was something he didn't need or want to know any more about.

"They came up with a scheme to get pregnant at the same time so their children would be exactly the same age, hence the 'only-child twins' designation we used to hear so much. Our fathers thought it was some sort of miracle, I suppose."

Ray's frown told her that he did not suppose the same as she did in this regard. His father would never have believed in miracles.

"Anyway, 'bing!' There we were, both in the maternity ward down in Concrete's Rawley General Hospital at the same time, Ray, with me being born one day ahead of you."

"Is this going to be an Esau and Jacob biblical fairy tale?" Ray asked skeptically with Helen noticeably disdaining the allusion. But he persisted. "Was I born with a string around my finger?"

"No. It's true, Ray." She was short of breath but continued, "But Mom got very ill shortly after I was born," a pause, "so while Helen was taking care of her, she also nursed both of us." Catching her breath as she scowled at Ray, she continued: "She said she'd have one of us on each breast and be so proud of her two little 'twins'."

Ray said, "Helen, that's not even true."

"It *is* true, Ray! I told my Mom what Helen had told me and she confirmed it. She said that after that, they used to take turns doing the shopping while the other one nursed us both. Sometimes they did that just for fun, too. Helen didn't tell me this, but Mom did. Mom said that sometimes when they were visiting each other in the daytime, they'd take their bras and tops off to help each other with their housework. Or they'd just sit around and talk with us

dangling on the same set of breasts while the other mother watched, and then they'd change off."

Ray said, "That's ridiculous, Helen!" and got up to leave.

"Well, Lesa thought it was cute," Helen said watching his reaction.

He jerked his head around, his eyes interrogating her. "You didn't?"

"I did," she said, smiling as he walked off and she drifted back to sleep. The smile was still there as she slept when Ray came back in a few minutes later.

Finally, he was able to smile too, "I love you my 'only-child twin'."

The Mariners had once again earned a shot at the World Series by dint of Paul Bloomberg's home run in the ninth in Yankee Stadium that the Yankees had let stand. George Steinbrenner had been stymied again. So Ray was activated and would await the sixth game to see what played out. He was worried about it, he told Lesa, because he felt as though he had lost a lot of conditioning, even if he had kept up on some of the calisthenics and running in place.

They made it to the sixth game back in Seattle again. Ray was once more in uniform. Eddie's Lisa stayed with Helen and Little Eddie. The rest of the family was at SAFECO Field with bells on.

Helen urged Lesa to come and work the game on Hot Box Sports with Joe and Tim as they had so strongly insisted, but she refused.

"It's hard for Ray and I to know how to act together in public with all the things that are going on, Helen. You understand, don't you?"

She did.

Again, the Mariners won the sixth easily, but were having trouble in the seventh. They were down three to two in the ninth and got two on with Juni Masoni and Hiro at second and first, respectively. Hiro's infield hit had come off the great closer who had been put on the mound to get him out. But then there were two quick outs.

Mac Heller decided to move right then, calling a time out. He walked over to Ray to discuss tactics. "It's different this time Ray. This is going to be tough. I think they'll give up a walk to get around you. If they do, they may be a little careless with that first pitchout."

"Yeah," Ray understood. "We'll give it a go," Ray said, and Mac slapped his butt as the batboy gave Ray Hiro's bat.

Meanwhile there was a convention taking place on the mound.

Ray stepped to the plate, situating his feet for an at bat. But the catcher held his mitt out to the side toward first. Ray checked the signs for hit-and-run. As the pitch to the outside was on its way. Juni and Hiro both ignited their tremendous bursts of speed. Ray raised his left leg high into the air, leaping toward first. He swung the bat in that direction, connecting with the ball. It struck the end of his bat just before his left foot hit the ground well on the first base side of home plate. The ball was a blooper just over the head of a leaping first baseman. The right fielder had been in right center back near

the warning track. He came bursting in to get to the ball that landed just past the infield grass. Ray had dropped Hiro's bat and was running as fast as he could toward first. The second baseman, Bruno Lossi, who had scurried back to second with Hiro running, turned to scramble back to get the ball behind first, but Juni had already scored with Hiro rounding third when Lossi got it. Ray had made it safely to first as the ball was fielded. But Ray made a show of breaking for second as Lossi was getting in stride to throw to the plate, which if thrown on target would have nailed Hiro easily.

Everyone gasped. The second baseman had been in full wind up to send the ball to the plate. Now he seemed confused, and when Ray appeared to trip as he turned to get back to first, doing a spread eagle with the first baseman yelling for the ball, Bruno changed his motion and threw to first. Ray was up immediately and heading back toward second. The first baseman tried to tag him but missed. Ray was faster than he had thought. The short stop was just a little way in front of Ray by then, so the ball was thrown to him. Ray stopped abruptly and turned back to first. Before they could tag him out, Ray saw that Hiro had scored.

"Wow!" Joe Brett exclaimed laughing in total disbelief! "Have you *ever* seen anything like that?"

The stands were going wild. The Mariners bench cleared. Livid, the National League manager was yelling at the home plate umpire. The gist of his explanation was that although one can't leave the batter's box to swing at a ball, one is not legally out of the box until one's foot hits the ground, and by then the ball had already been sent on its way. The Mariners had by hook or crook won another World Series.

The TV noise bothered Helen, so she and Eddie's Lisa had been watching with the sound muted. Helen and Lisa had had Lesa Sorensen on the speaker phone for the latter half of the game to commiserate. When Helen dozed, the two Lisas talked. Then Helen and Lesa silently watched Ray's at bat. At what ensued, Helen said. "Isn't he amazing, Lesa?" Both Lisa and Lesa confirmed it.

What more could one say about that?

Well, Ray got the World Series MVP award again with his bloop single without complaining. What was the use?

Tim McCarthy seemed almost to have changed his mind about baseball just being about statistics. "There's definitely something more to this than that," he admitted, "For that performance Ray Bonn deserves an Oscar in addition to the MVP award, Joe."

How could Joe have disagreed?

The Bonn's had a somewhat muted version of the celebration they had had the previous year. Helen stayed up in her chair until a little while after they returned home afterward. Ray helped her to their bedroom. "I was on the phone to Lesa when you did it, Ray," she struggled to say. "It was wonderful getting to share it with someone else who had to be excluded. Call her, Ray."

After he had given Helen her pills, tucked her in, and saw her snoozing, he went out into the drizzle on the terrace to talk to Lesa.

Lesa had mastered everything in his life and could share every nuance with him. Her blue eyes that would not leave him 'til the sunlight touched his face were on him now.

When Ray went back in, Helen was still asleep. The family was busy chatting about the humorous aspects of that final play in the living room by the fireplace. Lisa was off in the family room by herself, nursing Little Eddie. Ray walked in and sat down by her.

"Thank you for keeping Helen such good company," he said.

"I loved doing it. I like watching you do what you do in uniform, but I don't enjoy the crowds... especially with Little Eddie." They smiled at each other. "I'll bet you're tired, Ray. Did you call Lesa?"

"I am tired, and yes, Helen had me call Lesa... because she knew I would want to, I guess."

"A good enough reason, don't you think?"

He looked at her thinking about it and nodded. "It is," he said. He watched her uninhibitedly changing nipples for Little Eddie. Then he said, "Lisa, I'll bet you can't imagine how many times Helen and I tell each other how happy we are that Eddie found you."

She just smiled at him and said, "Me too."

Helen's favorite candidates met with major success in the election, which made for a happy day for Helen. She watched some of the Election Night coverage. She received accolades and well-wishing from winners.

Then, of course, Ray won the Ray Bonn Spectacular Event Award that year, and that was it. A fitting tribute. No more stealing of awards from other worthies for a single, even if 'spectacular', show.

Helen continued to get weaker. In addition to overwhelming Bonn family support, round the clock nursing support was brought in just to be available. Helen no longer left her bed. She ate and drank very little and slept a larger and larger percentage of the time. Comfortable chairs were placed around their bedroom and Ray slept on a day bed that they had situated over in a corner of the room that was used for sitting in the daytime. She was in so much pain that someone else in the bed making even normal movements proved too painful for her.

Thanksgiving was a very muted affair for the Bonn family this year. December came, and although she was increasingly losing a sense of the amount of time that passed or did not pass, one day Helen asked in her barely audible whisper, "When do you... go to... Stockholm, Ray."

"I'm not going," he said.

"Ray, you... *have* to. That is... a shot... *I'm* calling. Remember? *I* get to call... the shots... and *you*... make them... for me."

"Not this time, Helen. I'm staying with you."

Allie was there with him; Ray had told her his decision earlier. She had gotten on the phone with him to Lesa to inform her that indeed Helen was fading fast, and however much Helen insisted that he go, he would not leave her. He had to be here when she died. There was no other way. Would Lesa please work that, however it was possible to work it. If it resulted in his ineligibility to receive the prize, then that was as it must be. In that, or any other case, would she receive the award in the spirit of both of them having received it. Ray would really appreciate that.

Lesla performed magnificently as always. She must have been much of the charm of that most charming of all festivities, Ray thought. On the occasion she gave the following speech that was well-aired by the media in the US:

"Your Majesties, Your Royal Highnesses, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

"My collaborator and greatest friend regrets the serious illness of his lovely wife, my own beautiful and most gracious friend, Helen Bonn, that precludes his appearance in person here today. So for both he and myself, I wish to express our most extreme gratitude for this honor you have bestowed upon us. We recognize that the Nobel Prize in physics is the premier recognition of scientific achievement. Your acknowledgement of our efforts to understand the nature of irreversibility and entropy that has been so elusive for so long as being worthy of this award is indeed a dream come true for both of us. Thank you," a pause and another, "thank you.

"I would be grateful if you would please indulge me now as I share a story told me by my friend and colleague, Ray Bonn," Lesa began, "who says that the impossible doesn't happen... by definition." There were chuckles in the audience. "He is the archetypal scientist." She paused, not just for effect, but to remember that friend herself. "But that doesn't mean that the *extraordinary* doesn't happen. It happens all the time... especially for him! He can't be here today, but the reason I'm here at all is because he willed it. I don't have much that I can say for myself other than my extreme gratefulness and to admit that I have indeed dreamed of this occasion often."

"A year and a half ago now Ray described to me an episode that had occurred to him fifteen years earlier. He was an engineer... a physicist mind you, who was employed as an engineer. A co-worker had just returned from discussing a matter with their manager. Ray asked him how the discussion had gone. The friend said that he didn't think their manager liked him very well. Ray said, why would he not like you? To this his friend said, 'I don't know, but it seemed to be because of what I told him about his job as manager.' He had asked the manager what he planned to be doing in five years. The manager had looked at him as though he were being impertinent and said, 'I don't know. Why?' Then Ray's friend had said, 'Because I plan to have your job in five years!'" The crowd chuckled a little at that, and she went on.

"Ray acknowledged that, of course, their manager might not like that! 'It's pushy!' is what Ray told him. And his friend asked, 'Why? Everyone knows

what they want to have accomplished in five years and where they want to be.' To that Ray had said, 'No, they do not!' His friend repeated that they did, in fact, and that Ray Bonn knew exactly what he wanted to have accomplished in five years. Ray stubbornly remonstrated that that was not true. He got very angry with his friend who still would not let up with regard to Ray knowing what he wanted to have accomplished in five years. Finally, Ray exploded angrily... and this is an important part..." She paused punctuating the story with silence. "Some people have significant goals they wish they could achieve, but they're smart enough to realize that they could never in their wildest dreams achieve them."

The audience seemed to resonate with that, so she paused.

"But his friend continued persistently." She paused again. "He was probably a lot like me," she editorialized here, to which there was loud applause. She showed her embarrassment by blushing. "Continuing down that dangerous road I know so much about," more laughter, "he told Ray that if he really wanted something, that he could, in fact, achieve it. Ray was so angry at him finally that he blurted out, 'Ok, in five years I want to have won the Nobel Prize in physics.'" The hall went wild with laughter and applause.

After a bit Lesa raised her arms and brought them down to silence the crowd. "I know, you think we're witnessing a miracle here." She smiled and the crowd reveled again. She silenced them again. "Well, it *isn't* a miracle. For one thing, that was over fifteen years ago, not five." There was more laughter. "Ray said that the discussion hadn't stopped there, that his friend had said, 'No, really!'" to which Ray had replied, 'Yes, *really*.'" More applause.

"After that episode Ray had been distraught with his friend and humiliated for having been forced to bare his soul concerning secrets of which he had not even been consciously aware himself. The upshot is that he could never really relax again." She paused for a few seconds, tears welling up in her eyes. "Here I am exposing secrets of the greatest friend I've ever known once again, and this after having forced him into winning a couple of World Series rings." She smiled to an understanding audience that was obviously very emotionally stirred. Then after another brief pause, she got it back together and went on.

"The vast disparity between what he saw as his *actual* achievements in life (which were considerable) and what he had been forced to confess to actually having wanted was so great that he would have been further shamed by not redoubling efforts to investigate physical theories. He had been doing that off and on at a more relaxed pace in his spare time. He said that putting in additional effort became the only way he could live with himself. He had continued studying relativity and its problems ever since his days at the University, but now with a vengeance... and you know what he was ultimately able to achieve in that arena. Then there were his efforts in thermodynamics for which I now share this great award. Not all of what he drove himself to achieve has yet been presented to the world these many years later. There was more in that bag from which this work derives. I hope he will let me help him with those tasks as well."

She stopped and just stood there as though shocked by what she had exposed of Ray's life... again.

"All Ray asked me to do was to thank you all for this great honor you have bestowed upon him as well as me. I hope you, and he, and Helen... and his friend to whom he had reacted so vehemently (and who is still his great friend) will all forgive me for this so great an indiscretion," and she sat down, tears flowing. After a few seconds of absolute silence there was an eruption of applause to which she smiled through her tears.

The Bonn family was all together watching and listening. They were thrilled with Lesa's presentation.

Helen even watched and smiled, clutching Ray's hand. The family couldn't tell how much she comprehended until, in her now barely audible and raspy whisper, she said, "You didn't... tell her... the whole... story... did... you... Ray?"

#15 Sorrow and Grief

Ray carried Helen to her bed after the televised coverage of Lesa's speech. She lay gently against him as he walked the length of the hall to their bedroom. He knew that every movement was painful for her despite the heavy dosage of pain medication, but she smiled up at him all the way in spite of it.

"Was... n't... she... pret... ty..., Ray?"

To whom had she referred? Ray could not tell. Lesa in Stockholm or her cousin Julie swaying again in the waterfall up at their secret place, or both? And how much was projection? Ray looked down through tears at the mere wisp of sweet smoke he carried so carefully. There seemed only ethereal substance to her now.

"We... did..." She paused longer than her usual delay between syllables, "get... free... of..." another longer pause, "civ... il... i... za..." Ray saw the lips move in an attempt to effect a final phoneme, but they failed.

"We did," he said, "and there were no monsters there, were there?"

"No," she whispered, "Just... love."

They were in the bedroom then. With tears streaming from his eyes, he kissed her clammy forehead.

After having been laid tenderly onto the pillows that Allie had fluffed up, Helen smiled her thank you heroically, and was soon asleep with that angelic smile still in place. Ray sat beside Allie on his daybed for some time just watching Helen in silence. Thinking. She had indeed victoriously defied established traditions, and together they truly had freed themselves of the established approach to just about everything, her moral outrage and instincts always guiding the way.

The nurse came in presently to check vital signs, which process apparently did not disturb Helen's sleep. The nurse communicated with her eyes that these signs were worsening.

Ray put his arm around Allie as much for his own support as for hers as they continued to sit that way in a suspended state for a long time until finally Tom came to the door motioning for Allie who went to confer with him briefly. She returned to sit by Ray after Tom had gone to pick up Cecil and Stephanie at Tom's sister's, leaving Allie to spend the night. Judy and Jamie came into the bedroom then to look at Helen and to tell Ray and Allie that they would be going – to call them if there were any change. A while later Lisa and Eddie

came in to see how it was going. Lisa told Allie that she would spell her off at two AM. Little Eddie had been tucked in bed long before.

It must have been two o'clock because a sleepy-eyed Lisa had joined their silent vigil in the dim light, sitting on the daybed. The night nurse had placed her chair right up next to Helen holding her hand and wrist much of the time. Helen had entered a restless phase of sleep with some delirious mumbling. She threw up a vile looking maroonish-colored substance that the nurse told them was mostly old blood. Then it was all blood... new blood.

Once Helen sat up straight gesticulating wildly as the nurse tried to clean her up. She stared from uncomprehending eyes. Her frantic high-pitched delirious screech, a sound Ray could not avoid associating with her squeal at her cousin Julie back up at their pond so many years before, resulted in a shot being administered by the nurse. Ray rose to object, but both Allie and Lisa held him back, whispering reassurances. Then it didn't seem like anytime at all until the nurse turned to them indicating that Helen had died.

Although Ray knew he should have known it was imminent, he hadn't. He was beside himself with a rush of grief so forceful his body trembled and jerked. He leapt up with a plaintive squeal of anguish tossing the women aside. He knelt down beside Helen's now tiny body, his face on her breast, his hands on her cheeks, sobbing inconsolably.

Eddie was there with the girls when they finally persuaded Ray to come away. The nurse had gotten a syringe ready to give him something to relax; it was raised when Ray saw it, ready for him. He screamed curses at the nurse to get out of his sight. Lisa gently led the nurse out of the room; she still wanted their help to give him the shot even against his will. Allie and Eddie gradually calmed Ray somewhat, and after much urging, were finally able to get him to quit the bedroom and got him into the family room where Lisa gave him some coffee she had brewed.

Jamie appeared very shortly and began making the necessary arrangements for the body. "The body," Ray thought, "their own mother." How could such a lovely loving person just suddenly become a body?

Allie had evidently telephoned Lesa per some prearranged agreement. After talking with her for some time, Allie put the phone to Ray's ear. He was unaware of whose voice he would be hearing. When he heard Lesa sobbing on the other end, he burst into tears again and cursed, handing the phone back to Allie disdainfully.

The next few days were a dreary collage of just such morbid events. Helen's body was laid out at a funeral home for viewing by friends and family. Ray was amazed at how many friends Helen had had. He knew so few of them. Flowers from her friends and the children seemed to overwhelm the sanctity of the situation. To Ray it seemed like some prehistoric ritual for royalty, the significance of which seemed beyond his comprehension. Huge elaborate sprays of flowers from the Mariners, the media, politicians, and obscure corporate interests made no sense to him at all, but offended him nonetheless.

After too many days there was a secular funeral at which many of Helen's closer friends and the family expressed their pathos by relating special attributes of this most saintly of non-religious ladies. Helen's cousin Julie spoke. Ray actually looked up to see her. She was, as he and Helen had thought she would become, an aging Venus of Willendorf, but not in the least grotesque, certainly not what one could refer to as fat in any usual sense. She was still beautiful in her own way, and she was indeed most kindly in her articulated remembrances of Helen, of her sincerity at trying to make the world a better place, and her amazing successes in having done so. Clearly Julie also was still consumed with that same fire. It seemed strange that Helen had not worked more directly with her, or at least that Julie had never come to their place to discuss things with Helen.

Ray barely listened to most of the soliloquies, however, just enduring the ordeal as the first part of an untenable eternity without Helen. He noticed that Jonesy had blubbered foolishly for too long. However, Ray was more annoyed with Allie who sat beside him, fidgeting and clearly more agitated by Jonesy's prolonged, sobbing sentimental soliloquy than even Ray was.

Then he heard that familiar clear voice of the blue eyes of cathedral doors interrupted by sobs, the voice that read technical papers and his own writing to him in his head. Lesa was there somewhere extolling Helen's virtues and even evoking a gentle chuckle by mentioning how Helen had in her kind and unobtrusive way been responsible for her husband's and Lesa's having received awards for which Helen had been given far too little of the credit. Ray sat, head down, crying almost like an infant until, hearing little Eddie's louder version, he became very confused and self-conscious. Then he sat in a stone cold, dumb silence, hearing too little of what Lesa had had to say.

After the informal ceremony Julie had come up to express sorrow personally to Ray. He truly did appreciate her. A few close friends had been invited to remain longer, standing around the casket with family. Then Lesa came over to where Allie and Eddie's Lisa supported Ray on each side. He hadn't seen her approach or even noticed when Allie had introduced her silently to Lisa, but her soft, "Ray, I am so sorry," brought an immediate convulsion of sobs. Lesa threw her arms around him, both of them sobbing uncontrollably in each other's arms. A camera flash brought them back from some unconscious oblivion to the harshness of reality. She kissed his cheek and fled.

Jamie, Eddie, and Tom had the offending media cameraman escorted out at once, but the photo of the grieving Nobel Laureates appeared in all the major news outlets. It did indeed capture a token of the grief felt by each, as well as their love that shared some part of it. But Lesa was gone when he had finally cleared his eyes. He thought he might have seen a glimpse of her as she left under a green "EXIT" sign with someone who looked like Cynthia. Allie confirmed later that it had indeed been Cynthia. She had traveled with Lesa from Boston where she had stopped off briefly on her way back from Stockholm.

As a final resting place, Helen was buried in the 'new' cemetery up on the ridge overlooking the reservoir that had been Canyon Creek, within a mile of where her and Ray's 'secret place' was buried half way down into the depths from which the only-child twins had sprung.

Their three children agreed, and Ray concurred, to put her words, "The tragedy cannot be in dying, but in not having lived," on her tombstone. She was situated between her own and Ray's mother, filling the vacancy there that Ray's mother had denied her husband whose ashes had therefore been allowed to flow over the dam and down river. Ray thought Helen's epitaph should have read, "The first of the only-child twins," but he didn't tell anyone.

To say the loss of Helen was devastating to Ray would be too gross an understatement. He could not imagine his own life without her in it, or without her *being* it. It was as though she *were* his life, had always *been*, and that he had only occasionally and casually looked in on it with too little interest from the outside. Now there was nothing left to look in *on*, and he was left floating in the abstractions that he had only pretended had been a meaningful portion of life.

He knew he hadn't the slightest idea about what was involved in just *living* his life every day. He had *not* lived. Helen had done that for him because he had come to disdain all such *ordinary* things of which life is comprised. She had done the living for him and steered his comatose body around each corner as though on a gurney with him under heavy sedation heading for the next operating room.

Luckily Allie was there. However sad, sensitive and loving, Allie demonstrated tremendous personal strength to help Ray through the depths of despondency in December... January... and February. It seemed sometimes that perhaps he would need support until that last syllable of recorded time for him. He was, as his children repeatedly told each other in amazement, "a totally broken man".

Allie was everyone's choice as executor and to take over many of those considerable financial chores Helen had taken care of so efficiently. Allie's degrees had been in finance-related areas, much to Ray's chagrin, his having envisioned her as a scientist.

Interacting with Lesa Sorensen as Helen had, became a regular aspect of this endeavor. Allie and Lesa had become fast friends on the four days they had been together when Ray had been hijacked to California. Helen had mentioned the separation of the estate for tax purposes so that half would be in each of Helen's and Ray's names. Thus, with her passing the children inherited with less tax burden half of what would otherwise have been a larger taxation percentage when Ray 'passed'. Helen had wanted to assure them that nothing that transpired after her death would deny her children their rightful inheritance. The three women had not mentioned what on earth that might be.

Jamie and Judy had asked to have Christmas at their now elaborately remodeled home. Allie would no-doubt otherwise have had to do it, along with her heavy schedule with children, as well as looking after Ray's life and, as

executor, the inheritance for Helen's separated financial legacy. Allie welcomed the so charming changes in Judy's acceptance of Jamie's family, and the sudden emergence of domestic instincts concurrent with Helen's illness, a blossoming that had quite shocked all of the family.

That Christmas occasion was a very special one in maintaining the cohesiveness of the family that they had each been afraid might dissolve once its driving force had passed. Ray had moped around considerably to be sure, but the occasion had even had its enjoyable moments for him, just to see how well his family had survived their terrible loss.

He had spoken to Lesa only once and very tearfully and briefly since Helen's funeral. As Lesa told Allie on their fairly frequent interactions, although she too had suffered a great loss in Helen's passing, she really couldn't bear speaking with Ray while he was so despondent about a loss she knew he would think she had no legitimate role in consoling. It was just awful for her.

Allie understood; their developing friendship consoled them both.

Near the end of January Eddie began pressuring Ray to consider teaching a course and giving a series of lectures in his department during Spring Quarter. Ray, still chafing somewhat at having been whisked off under somewhat dubious and certainly false pretenses before, was not inclined to do that again. Eddie persisted nonetheless, the children having evidently learned piloting skills from their mother.

One day it was Eddie's Lisa who called to tell Ray how much they would enjoy having him stay with them whether or not he took up the temporary position at the 'Farm', as Stanford was affectionately called by those within its domain. Little Eddie needed to grow up knowing his Grumps. Ray had always been easier for women to control than for other men, and with Lisa and Allie both pushing and Eddie pulling, finally in late February Ray began talking in earnest about what would be involved with Eddie's suggestion.

A senior level course in relativity that would cover the concerns identified in his *Aberrations of Relativity* was what was wanted, and of course they would like him to provide the occasional more public Nobel Laureate Lecture covering his and Lesa's research. The course would be set up too late now to get into the printed catalogue for the university before Spring Quarter began. But course credit would be established and offered for all the qualified seniors in the related departments. They would all be apprised of its being offered and special schedule flexibility considerations would be accommodated. In fact, all affected students had already been informed that the course might be offered with enthusiasm having been expressed by virtually all of them. The department head Ray had met earlier was certain that a large percentage of seniors wanted to enroll.

Ray had never done anything of the like, although his earlier experience on that campus had assured him that the role would be a pleasant responsibility. He told Eddie, finally, that he would indeed like to try it; how should he proceed?

Ray could tell that Allie was very relieved by his decision. Thus, it finally dawned on him that although he had been totally unaware of what a burden he had been on her, he had been just that. He decided that he would not transfer his considerable emotional weight onto Eddie and Lisa. He would find an apartment down there.

He went down early. Lisa and Little Eddie became his daily traveling buddies as he checked out various apartments near campus. They finally found a rather swank furnished condominium that was being leased while an influential professor was on sabbatical leave in Europe. It seemed perfect for his purposes.

#16 Restarting

At the beginning of the year Lesa Sorensen had taken a not dissimilar position at Harvard, although hers was more like a 'chair' with considerably more prestige and influence – distinction. She was able to commute from her so comfortable situation with Fredrik and Cynthia as but one more laurel of the Sorensen 'cottage'. That was, in fact, her home now.

She was becoming quite spinsterish she had told Allie. "I'm not sure but what my students and fellow professors consider me somewhat of a bitch." She missed the Bonns... all of them. She would still not be comfortable communicating with Ray, primarily she conceded, because Ray would not be comfortable communicating with her.

As their teaching involvements increased, it would have been natural for them to have guest lectured for the other on topics they now both taught at the same level at two top quality universities. But neither of them would risk rejection, or acceptance, or even the effort of breaking the ice to communicate, lest the other should for any reason feel otherwise. Allie was totally disgusted with both of them.

Ray had for quite some time quit exercising altogether, but now he began again, beginning to see glimmers of sunlight between the leaves as he ran. Having gone even as far south as central California produced a major difference in his outlook as far as the weather. He had complained to Allie almost daily that he hated the dreariness of forty-one-degrees-and-drizzle every day for six months every year just as he had every winter to Helen.

Allie would laugh at him to cheer him up, even dared to call him Eeyore as Helen had used to in teasing him out of the doom and gloom that had beset him quite often throughout most of his adult life.

As spring became warmer and jeans and short skirts, blouses and T-shirts replaced parkas, Ray began noticing that there was indeed still an effeminate biological aspect to life after all. The Julie Thompson he had met the previous fall was taking his class, and he did notice that she was pretty, she was smart, she did in some sort of way like Ray's style personally, just as he liked hers.

Oh, God, he thought, I will *not* let that happen. "Again," he acknowledged. Thus, he was driven to call Lesa.

"Oh, Ray Bonn, I do so love you," was how Lesa responded to seeing his ID show up on her phone for the first time in nearly six months.

"Oh, thank you," he said. "I have this beautiful and brilliant girl in my class whose name is Julie. I was starting to notice her, so I thought I ought to have something to compare her to, before I do something really foolish and she slugs me in the face and threatens to break my neck."

"Don't you dare, you bastard!" Lesa fairly yelled, and they laughed like old times. Julie Thompson never appeared on Ray's biological radar screen again.

"How are you, Ray? It sounds like teaching is helping you, like it is me."

"Yeah. You enjoy it too, huh?"

"It's filled a lot of time that has been left empty in my life, Ray."

"Me too." They chatted with lumps in their throats about how each had coped, then for some time about how they got into their current activities. How were both extended families doing. Then, of course, what were they each doing intellectually, which Ray admitted had been far too little for far too long for him.

"You know that *other* book you got mad at me for accessing when we were at the Sheltry?" Lesa asked. "*Cosmological Effects of Scattering in the Intergalactic Medium*, I think it was."

"Yeah, Right! You don't know, you just *think*?" Ray exclaimed.

"Of course I remember the title, but I don't *know* anything about it. You got angry with me, remember? So I didn't take it. What's it about though, Ray, alternative redshift, tired light? Are you into that?"

"I knew you had taken it, and I didn't know you ever let go of anything once you got your mitts on it," he teased.

"That's just you, Ray. I'm not letting go of *you*. I have checked on you every day or two with Allie in case you didn't know. Other than that, I try to do what I think you would like me to do. But tell me about that research, Ray. I need something to do."

"Well, that's good. Please, don't take your blues off me until a few more rays of sunlight hit me square in the face, okay? I need an awful lot of sunlight to break through the terrible darkness."

"Me too."

"That study was just an exploration of alternative redshift and other cosmological phenomena, like you said. I haven't worked on it for years. Those damn Lyman-alpha forests needed more explaining than I could come up with on my own and then we got gobbled up by irreversibility. I'll send the file to you if you like. I sort of broke my pick on it."

"I like. And be careful of that pick, Ray; don't let any Julies get near it. Is this something we can work on together?"

"My pick? Or the dispersion phenomena?" He teased. "You look at it, would you, and tell me if there's any hope of it going anywhere."

"Your pick goes nowhere, Ray. I'll look at the scattering to see if I think we can revive the patient."

"Okay, Doctor," Ray said. "But I've been starting to think about gravity again too – way in the back of my mind."

"Gravity? I was hoping we were maybe through with some of the gravity for a while, Ray. What aspect are you thinking about? If you were anybody else, I'd think you were going down the relativity generalization path, but I'm suspecting you're not."

"Yeah, I'm not. You into octonions?"

"Cayley numbers? I know what they are, of course – quaternions doubled, or squared, sort of – the nonassociative extension of quaternions. Right?"

"Right."

"Ed Watson and the boys were into them, of course. I used to look at their work sometimes. There was a guy – French name, de Maraise or something like that – that was into them. He wrote something like *Hitchhiker's Guide to Reality* where he talked about them. You don't have anything written up on what you're thinking yet do you?"

"No. I was just thinking about the three hypercomplex division algebras a while back trying to find a home for the notion of gravity as the residue of E and M."

"We need to double our cortex manifolds so both our thoughts can roam a little more freely with joint expression through the larger archives, don't you think?" Lesa asked hopefully.

"Yeah. Mine are definitely getting cabin fever." He smiled and could sense her smiling a couple of thousand miles away. Their thoughts seemed to expand like moving into the suite at the Sheltry to cohabit once more. He even thought he caught a whiff of her marvelous aroma.

"By the way, have you read Penrose's *Road to Reality* yet?"

"No. I've seen a few of my students with it under their arms. I've wanted to read it. But it just seemed so long – eleven hundred pages or so, isn't it? I haven't had much energy and no one to discuss it with. I will get it now. I'll bet it's another great exposition. He is such a worthy opponent."

"He is. In this book he starts right out justifying those pancakes that come out of the Lorentz equations as *real*."

She laughed. "I'll bet you and he would have one interesting discussion on the reality of Plato's forms, and whether any sequence of transformations that have the same effect are equally real."

"Now that would be fun, wouldn't it? Don't you think it would?"

"It would be, especially if you'd let me be right there beside you, doing my prime-time thing right along with you and going blab blab blab."

It was so wonderful for Ray to have her company again strolling through the paths of their joint mind where they both belonged, but she had arrived on the Harvard campus by then. She would have to start class momentarily. "I don't even know your schedule though, Ray. Let me know it in an e-mail so I can get back when we can talk longer. *I've needed you*," she said at last, and as he remembered the conversation, he couldn't remember whether she had just said it or had sung it.

He would; his was pretty light; she should tell him hers. He needed her too. They pledged to keep in frequent contact from now on; then she hung up.

Ray felt the first real happiness, unadulterated by sorrow that he had felt in way too many months.

Thus, it was that he got working again and interacting on his ideas with Lesa again. The plasma scattering concept was jump-started, so they had a lot of the physics of electromagnetic scattering theory and astrophysics to occupy their thoughts. They were enthused again.

He found that he was finally able to address emotional issues relating to their relationship that he had buried for the last year. They were beginning to occupy more of his thoughts. Once in talking with her he alluded to the notions he had worked out in trying to resolve their personal frustrations on his way back from Portland. From that last time he had seen her, when he had been so emotionally devastated. His memory of that lonely trip north loomed large for him now, that unfinished business from a year ago that had seemed in subsequent conversations with Helen to have merged with his memories of sexual frustration of his early youth.

He tried to explain to Lesa how as he drove north, he had addressed the confusion he had felt about himself and the two women he loved. He had considered the kinds of control each of them had over him and how little he had over himself. He tried to explain how he had come to a tentative resolution on what the soul mate aspect was that he and Lesa shared and how that differed in subtle and not so subtle ways from the relationship he had had with Helen all his life before that. He had finally realized in what ways they both had seemed to be essential to his sense of self-worth. They both still were.

When he paused, there was no sound on his phone. She was gone. He had lost contact. Sometime later when she called him back, she made no mention of what he had been saying when contact had been lost. It worried him for a few days that maybe she had actually heard most of what he had said and hadn't wanted him to bring it up again. Maybe she really was over that aspect of Ray Bonn and considered him primarily a colleague now.

But finally, he decided to broach the subject again on an occasion when she would not be traveling on her way to or from her classes so that it would not be awkward for her if that had had anything to do with it.

"I did hear you, Ray. I think I may have heard it all. I'm sorry, but I just had to hang up."

He could tell that she was upset talking about it now, so he said, "It's all right, Lesa. It seemed so important at the time; it *is* important. It's important to me. There are things I need to fix about myself. But it isn't something I have to discuss or anything. You don't need to address it."

There was silence again, but the phone was not dead. He could hear her breathing. Finally, there was a clearing of her throat and a snuffle followed by, "Ray, I never want to shut you up on what you need to say. It isn't that my darling, okay," and she was silent again for a few seconds.

"Once I heard that you had found out about Helen's illness right after you got back, and probably had premonitions about it before, I felt so awful for what I had done that I seriously considered suicide. But I knew that ending my pain that way would make it even worse for you and Helen. That's what kept me going, Ray. That was all that kept me alive."

"When Helen called to invite me to spend those days with her alone, it was the most wonderful thing that could ever have happened to me. She finally got me out of that terrible despondency and made me laugh again. Dad and Cynthia had been worried about me, and I was worried about myself, but none of us could figure out the right thing to do. Did you know that Helen talked to me right after you got back?"

"No, but I guessed that she might have."

"I think she knew that we had had a problem of some sort on that Oregon debacle of ours. I think she wanted to find out what had gone on so she could figure out what was wrong with you. That's what I surmised, so I knew you had been bothered. I was vague about it, because it was personal between you and me, some of it so wonderful, some so awful. Then I didn't talk to either you or her again for a long time. I couldn't call then."

"When she had Allie call finally to tell me about her illness. Allie said that Helen didn't think you had told me and that she thought I ought to know. Did you know any of that?"

"No."

"She knew you weren't calling me anymore and I wasn't calling you." Lesa stopped speaking again, obviously sobbing.

"I couldn't call you then," Ray said. "How could I?"

"I know. When I found out, all I could do was cry. I cried for weeks. I couldn't call and tell you how sorry I was. I couldn't ask you to forgive me, or say please, please, please forget that horrible rampage I had gone off on. I couldn't call Helen to ask her the forgiveness that I could not continue to live without. I had kidnapped her husband in New York and spent all my spare time trying to figure out how to seduce him and get him away from her and I had finally got to realize the full pleasure of sexuality and was greedy for it never to stop. I was just overwhelmed with how awful I had been, Ray. I made it so hard for you to be the perfect husband that you had always tried to be. I gloated over every success and whined when you stood firm."

"Oh, Lesa. None of that was your fault. It was mine."

"Well, Helen forgave me, and generously explained what she felt she needed forgiveness for herself – from you as well as me."

"From me?"

"Yes. Someday, Ray, if we ever are in each other's arms for days and days and days and all night long forever, with no fear of ever being apart again, then while you're holding me so tightly, maybe then we can talk about all this... then. But it can't be done over the phone. It just can't. I can't take it. And it couldn't be done right. I need to be in your arms for that."

"I understand now," Ray said. "It was just that I had had that little epiphany on the trip up that I hadn't ever been able to share with you for closure on that trip that was both so wonderful and so awful. I think I was beginning to understand some things that would have seemed so damned straight-forward for anybody else."

"I want to understand it with you, but without you holding me, I can't bear it, Ray. I just can't."

"Yeah, I see that now. I'm really sorry I got us off on this sad note again."

"Don't be. I need to know that it's there even if I'm not ready to handle it."

There was another lengthy pause.

"You know how I couldn't remember my mother's death, and you did the groundwork for freeing me from all that?"

"Yes."

"Well, I finally remembered the whole thing and explained it to my family... and a shrink I was seeing for a while. Did I ever tell you I was in therapy for a while?"

"No. I guess we weren't talking then."

"No, we've had some hard times, haven't we?" She paused a moment before proceeding.

Ray thought she would maybe chuckle, but she was sobbing.

"It was awful getting my arms around that situation from my childhood, Ray. But I got through it and it isn't a problem anymore."

"I'm glad, Lesa." But he wondered.

"Yes." There was a lengthy silence again. "But this is the same sort of thing for me. Helen did the groundwork on this one, but you're going to have to work with me on it to get us both through it. It's both of us, Ray... and Helen too, just as if she were still here in person. She told me something to tell you when you were ready. But I don't think either of us is quite ready for that yet. We'll discuss it someday."

"No. I just wanted you to know that I knew you hadn't done anything wrong. That I had been working through my part of it, and now I think I need to try to figure out a little more about myself... to get ready. Then... well, I know what you're saying, that after a while we will have to help each other. But I guess we're probably not ready for that yet. Are we?"

There was another longer pause

"No, we're definitely not ready. I did a lot of wrong things, Ray. I have to finish figuring that out too." She paused again.

Then finally, "You know that photographer that sneaked in and took our picture at Helen's funeral?"

"I remember. Those damn paparazzi."

"I actually got hold of him eventually and had him send me a poster size image of that photo. He was very polite, apologetic really. I've had it on my wall ever since. I'm looking at it now. It helps."

"It helps?"

"Yes, it does. It's you and me... and Helen... the way it is... with none of us having to say anything at all. There's so much more to this than you know, Ray. We'll have to work on it together."

"Thanks for talking with me, Lesa, for listening and explaining what you have. We have to work on everything together, don't we? It's the way it is with us. I won't bring it up again 'til you think we're ready. It's enough for now. Thanks. Know I love you."

After a few moments he asked, "Do you suppose you could get me a copy of that photo?"

"Sure, Ray. I'll send one to you. I had him send me an extra because I thought that someday you might like one."

"Yeah, I would, and thank *you*. I do love you so much."

"I'll send it right away."

And that was that. He received the photo. Although he couldn't bring himself to hang it, he kept it laid out in his drawer and looked at it frequently. It helped express what was so hard for him to formulate.

May had progressed on into June and efforts to prepare finals were in process for their respective classes. Then finals were over, and activities were definitely winding down on campus. Ray had the stuff in his office all packed up in boxes. He had been living out of similar boxes for a week at his apartment getting ready to migrate north for the summer.

As he sat in his office wondering about his future, there was a tap tap on his door; the door to his office was already open. Julie Thompson stood there leaning against the door jam, the Julie he had encountered on all those earlier occasions here at Stanford. She had obviously just picked up her final from his class and had it in her hand. Hers had been the highest mark in his class again.

Looking up and seeing her there, he brightened and said, "Oh, Hi, Julie. Congratulations!"

"Thank you," she said. "I really enjoyed your class by the way. You're very good at keeping us motivated."

He smiled his appreciation. "You don't seem to need much of that from outside sources. You've been by far my best student, Julie; you have a bright career in front of you."

Julie proceeded to change her weight from one foot to the other awkwardly.

"Is there something you needed?" he asked.

"Oh, no, but I was just wandering: Your wife died, didn't she?"

He looked directly into her eyes. She seemed to care deeply.

"I'm gradually getting over it," he said at last. "It's hard. She died early last December. This teaching assignment has helped a lot."

"Do you still see Professor Sorensen?" she asked.

"Other than at the funeral, I guess I haven't seen her for a year, but we have started to do some work together again finally, so I talk to her occasionally now and we e-mail regularly."

"Do you think that you and she will ever get together – I mean personally? I'm really sorry to ask you all this personal stuff, but it really matters to me."

"You are refreshingly ingenuous, Julie; you remind me in many ways of Lesa. So, don't apologize. That's as good as it gets in my book."

"As far as Lesa and I getting together," Ray paused, thinking about that wonderful possibility. "I definitely hope so. I actually wouldn't have thought so until quite recently, but yeah, maybe."

"Well, you deserve somebody really nice, and really smart, like Lesa. I hope I can find someone like you someday."

"Julie, you've made my day." His expression belied that fact, if it was a fact. "When you do decide you've found that special someone though, make sure he is not going to be dead in just a decade or so. That is just too terrible, Julie. Just awful. I don't know why Lesa insists that she'll settle for nothing if not me, but apparently that's how it is. She deserves so much more than me or *nothing* that it makes me sad for her. She means everything to me now and she has for a long time. I guess everyone deserves something, and somebody, don't they?"

"That is so romantic."

"I hadn't really formulated my thoughts on any of this. It is just between you and me, and no one else for now, okay."

"Oh, I wouldn't tell anyone. I don't kiss and tell anymore." She smiled knowingly, both of them remembering the audacious comment Ray had made the previous fall that embarrassed him tremendously whenever he thought about it, especially now. "Shucks. I don't even kiss anymore."

Ray chuckled, "It'll all come back when the right guy comes along. I am so embarrassed about that comment I made. It was awful, Julie. I am so sorry."

"I suppose it'll come back. The comment was fine; it gave me a little mystique with my friends." She waved to him.

As she walked away, he attended her trailing comment, "Anyway, it's just physics after all, isn't it?"

Ray was invited to Eddie and Lisa's new home for supper that last evening. It was upscale and spacious. He could tell that Lisa was pregnant again although it had not yet been announced.

"So now you have room for Little Lisa," Ray said coyly.

"Yep, we've planned our family and the plan has now been fully executed, Pop," Eddie indicated.

"It seems like I remember having thought the same thing once." Ray laughed.

"I wasn't planned? Is that what you're trying to say?"

"Not by me you weren't, but then I wasn't the planner in the family, was I? I didn't plan anybody or anything. I never did and I guess I never will. But

you were definitely *wanted*. That's the important thing Eddie, don't you think? There's only so much you can say for a plan."

"Speaking of which..." He hoped his Pop would fill in the blanks, but Ray wasn't about to, so then Eddie pressed on, "You still in love with Lesa?"

"Of course he is, Ed." It was Lisa, shocked at her Eddie again, and coming to Ray's rescue. "Don't you remember what he told us?"

"Like what part of 'forever and ever' don't you get?" Ray teased.

"Exactly," Lisa said.

"How'd that ever work?" Eddie asked, clearly unimpressed.

Ray laughed. What else could he do.

"You and Allie took that pretty hard, didn't you? Allie seemed to be afraid I wouldn't ever love her again, and you feigned a fear of my tarnishing the last available Lisa till you found one who even spelled it correctly. I do know you had to have found her well before that and refused to tell us about *your* love life. That was private, wasn't it?" Ray teased. "And, of course, I knew that you and Allie were both just appalled that your mother was being mistreated and didn't want to formulate it that way."

Ray noticed that Lisa seemed more at ease with the banter than Eddie.

"So... what *about* Mom then?" He would not be distracted.

"That's the damndest thing," Ray said.

"You mean the fact that she understood?" Lisa asked.

"Yeah. Well, she always knew exactly what was going on in New York. She actually sort of started it after all, and I complained to her about what was going on every day. That first night I got back from New York and you put 'the number one question' to me, Eddie... remember that?"

"Yep, I remember, Pop. Sorry. But I wanted to know. You'd have done the same thing."

"Yeah, I suppose I might have. I was pretty tough on my old man." Ray laughed at just how true that was. Eddie certainly had an accurate model of *his* dad.

"Well, when your mom and I were getting ready for bed and flirting like people do after they've been apart for too long, your mom stopped me for a minute... and said, 'You know, Ray, if you didn't love Lesa after all that, I couldn't love you.'"

"Mom said *that*?"

"Of course," Lisa said. "Think about it."

Eddie looked at Lisa as if she too were totally insane.

"I don't really get it either, Eddie, and it ain't no recommendation, let me tell you that much. But Helen and Lesa got it even if it was terribly hard on both of them... and me. It still is."

"It *was* terribly hard on you, wasn't it?" Lisa empathized. "I saw that. And although you and Helen would have stayed together and loved each other happily forever, or whatever serves that purpose, with Lesa in the background somewhere, it'll be easier for you and Lesa now, won't it?" Lisa could ask the most damnably awkward questions.

"You two sure have a knack for tough questions, don't you? Lesa and I haven't broached any such sensitive topics. We just got back in contact a little while ago and fairly recently addressed one or two of those issues, deciding we couldn't handle it yet. Here I am having to answer those questions for my kids. Lesa and my relationship was dysfunctional from the start to say the least, Eddie," Right from the get-go. You had to know that. Well... until that trip you and Allie conned me into taking down here so that Helen could get together with Lesa the way she had wanted to long before.

"But... there was part of that story that happened the day after I was sick back in New York when Lesa got into the sack with me that I never told you. I shouldn't even have told you as much as I did, I know. It seemed to have shocked everyone." He laughed. "Me just shooting myself in the foot again, I guess, huh?"

"Ah," Eddie said, knowingly. "Now the truth comes out."

"No, Eddie, there was no sex, or no... *what you and I might call sex.* Anyway, I was honest-to-God sick."

Lisa laughed heartily.

Eddie just looked at her with disgust, "What the hell is so funny, anyway?"

Ray laughed too and said, "Eddie, if you figure out why she's laughing, you'll be thirty years ahead of me on figuring out women."

Lisa was enjoying it way too much from Eddie's perspective.

"Enough of this frivolity though," Ray said still rather enjoying Lisa's laughter. "What I didn't tell you about was what happened that next morning. I think the only reason I didn't tell you is because it is the part that I didn't understand. Still don't. I sure wasn't holding anything back, was I?"

"Well... Edna and Sharon were all sitting around with Lesa and I; we were finishing our breakfasts. I guess it was afternoon already, not morning. Lesa's friend, doctor Sharon, asked Lesa how she envisioned this relationship was going to work between her and her 'married boyfriend,' meaning *me*. I was kind of shocked because 'boyfriend' was something I definitely hadn't considered myself. There hadn't ever been any of what you could call 'boyfriend-girlfriend' stuff going on. But Lesa hopped right in there and said, 'I love Ray to the end of the universe and back.' Dr. Sharon and the rest of us raised our eyebrows as Lesa continued with, 'And Ray loves me that much too...'" Ray hesitated here, "and then sensing she was on a roll, I guess, she added, 'only more, because I have pastel pink nipples.'"

"Pastel pink nipples? Jesus H. Christ, Pop!"

"Listen, Eddie, quit asking tough questions if you can't take honest answers. That's what she said." Ray stopped; he was irritated.

"Go on, Ray. I have to hear the rest of this," Lisa said.

"Yeah, me too," Eddie said. "Sorry."

So Ray proceeded, "Well, anyway, Lesa went on to explain how I was married to Helen whom I had met on the day the universe was born. She said that she guessed that we would love each other until the end of that universe."

Ray looked at Eddie and then to Lisa. "That was the two-universe paradox you asked me about, Right? Well, that's how Lesa understood it. Okay?"

Lisa said, "That is precisely the problem I was talking about. What happens in cases of eternal triangles like that?"

Ray continued unabated, "Well, I certainly hadn't seen it as an eternal triangle thing, but Lesa went on to explain that," Ray did his finger wiggle to indicate that he was still quoting her now. "These two parallel universes are floating out there and there has to be a bridge constructed between them so Ray can commute."

"What?" Eddie exclaimed as Lisa continued smiling. "Commute?"

"Yeah, 'commute'. After the girls' giggles had all died down, me being the engineer and all, I asked her just how she planned to construct such a bridge. Such prattle seemed pretty absurd to me at the time, of course. Do you know what she said?"

"I haven't a clue," Eddie replied, still disgusted.

"I know," Lisa interjected, "She said she would have to get with Helen to figure that out."

"I told you she was a keeper, Eddie... and I know she's already kept."

"I said I was sorry for that a long time ago."

"I know. That was catty of me, but I'm the one under attack here, you know."

Eddie just stared at Lisa and then back at Ray incredulously. "That's what Lesa said? That's absolute insanity. You do know that, don't you?"

"Yeah, I thought so too. But I played along and asked her whether the thermodynamics book we were planning to write was going to contribute to the construction, and she said, 'Yes, I think it might.'"

"It did," Lisa said.

"Yeah, I guess it did. She decided on full collaboration a few days later," Ray confirmed, "probably for that very purpose."

"What do you mean?" Eddie asked. "No damned bridge ever got built. Mom died."

"No, Eddie," Lisa said. "It got built *and* then your mom died. Those are two different things, Eddie, two unrelated things. I saw your dad walking across that bridge last fall."

Eddie looked at Lisa and then at Ray. "It got built?" Eddie started laughing incredulous of the story.

"Yeah. I guess so. Thanks in no small part to you, I guess... I was more or less commuting before your mom died, but that sort of blew up the bridge and, of course, I was in your mom's universe at the time."

Eddie looked confused while Lisa smiled.

Ray's face twitched. "I'm still in what's left of that universe – floating around with all the debris."

"We're debris now?" Eddie asked, seeming to be offended.

"No, no, no!"

Ray excused himself to go to the bathroom and mercifully the conversation was no longer there when he returned.

#17 Encore

Back in Seattle Ray opened up the home where he and Helen had spent so many happy years, and moved back in. In retrospect all those years now seemed to have been happy. Everything there reminded him of her, so that now there was only a very quiet and sad desperation remaining. The serenity had been replaced by loneliness. He noticed that the dust that had had to be taken care of regularly had not accumulated much while he was gone, just a mustiness. He had always been skeptical about dust being human skin cells, but he guessed that must indeed be the case. All those layers of Helen's and his skin floating around and clinging to everything. As his own body continued its inevitable layer by layer decline, he guessed the dust would once again begin to build up between dustings.

Allie had picked him up at the airport and gone grocery shopping with him on the way back to get all the essentials he would need to start out. Then she did the walk through with him, clearly wondering how he would take the sights again without Helen.

Helen was everywhere, of course, but he found that he could handle it now. Allie had removed Helen's clothes and many of the daily aspects of Helen's computer-related life. They had become part of Allie's life now.

Ray knew he would have to start managing what Allie had been doing for him by himself now though. The months he had been away had helped. Allie left him more or less on his own then, calling him frequently, but not being there for everything anymore.

As soon as Allie drove away Ray was on the phone to Lesa. Her classes were just out too and she had graded and returned the finals. She was rather glad to have some time. They both spoke of having time, but neither spoke of the possibilities of their going one direction or the other to be with each other to spend that time, to have those days and days and days to work out who they were and how they had gotten there.

Ray told Lesa that he had been reminded of those old Bob Dylan lines, "You can't let other people get the kicks for you. It's all over now, Baby Blue." He knew that what Helen, and thereafter Allie, had done for him had not been "kicks" by any stretching of the imagination, but at the same time, it had been *life*, and he had missed out on a whole bunch of it.

The conversation came around finally, as it did too often, to Lesa being his agent who had to tell him that the Mariners were still trying to make a date for him to appear at the plate to pick up his second World Series ring.

"You know I still haven't seen the previous ring, Ray. I saw the baseballs and trophies when I was there and I loved holding them and thinking about each one while Helen would be sleeping, but the ring wasn't out. I should have asked Helen. You don't wear it, do you?"

"No, of course, I don't wear it. You know me better than that."

"I know, Ray. Rings probably don't mean as much to a 'guy'."

Ray didn't know whether this discussion of rings was some kind of ploy or just a bunch of facts. Asperger's syndrome again he suspected.

But he was really getting tired of the Mariners insisting that he suit up every whipstitch. He was an old man. At some point they would have to honor his just saying he was tired and retired. His last at bat had been rather ridiculous didn't she agree?

Lesa didn't agree, seeming to think that in some sense it had been his best 'performance'.

She suggested finally that maybe she should explain this sense of his weariness and desire to retire to them. Should she tell them that he would appear in one more game as a retirement gimmick. Then he'd be done with it.

Yes, okay. Good idea. One more time. He could maybe handle that.

So Lesa worked a lucrative deal like all his others where he would appear in one final game before the home fans and that would be his swan song. Mariners management bought into it and Ray was on the roster again, scheduled to play when the Yankees were in town next, a day game on a Saturday with a retirement celebration afterwards. It sounded fine, so she sent him the forms and it was scheduled.

Ray redoubled his exercises for the final weeks before his Major League career would go kaput. It worried him because he knew he had lost a considerable amount of conditioning during Helen's illness and thereafter. He could not now, nor probably ever again, regain it. He was too damned old.

The game would be hyped to the hilt with National TV coverage. Joe Brett and Tim no doubt. The family was abuzz for some pizzazz. But nobody mentioned Lesa, least of all Ray. He couldn't. Lesa had been ritualistically barred from the games in Seattle, more or less as penance for his family having been barred from Yankee Stadium. Lesa made no mention of the actual game to Ray other than contractual aspects required in the agent-client relationship.

It seemed to be a part of the two-universe system, Bonns here, Lesa there, Ray the telecommuter. Anyway, any invitation would seem to require acknowledgement of too much that no one really wanted acknowledged. This final game Ray saw as a sweeping away of that whole artifact rather than trying to clean it up for perpetuity.

The format of his participation would be the same as in the World Series games in which he had played. He'd sit there until Mac Heller decided to use

him. He'd go out there, a *Casey at Bat*, and swing the bat one, two, or three times and that would be that, the major league career of Ray Bonn in the books.

Between innings they chose to present each of his achievements on the big screen from his cringing on the Larry King Live show in anticipation, the first tentative home run, on to the convincing ones, the World Series Victories, and him accepting MVP awards not very graciously, etc. Ray sat and watched, mortified and elated in turns as they toasted him.

There were actually a couple of video clips he had not seen. He enjoyed watching himself scramble between first and second base like a wounded crab. So did the fans. He had wondered what that had looked like. It was a great memory seeing Hiro speed past home plate before Ray could be tagged out. Ray wondered whether there might be some shenanigan like that he could pull off today. It would avoid having to demonstrate whether he had the strength to put one over a fence. But he doubted whether he had the dexterity to accomplish such a feat today.

Because Lesa Sorensen was Ray Bonn's agent, a Nobel Laureate of some distinction, and a beautiful woman with a personality that could charm snakes and snake oil salesmen, her desires for Ray's final Hurrah were not without influence. She really didn't want Ray to be apprehensive, or to make this day awkward for him in any way. Her touches would have to be subtle. She knew that Ray would not be sent up to bat before the eighth or ninth inning. So she booked herself to appear with Joe and Tim on Hot Box Sports with the agreement that her appearance would not be announced (and she would be seen nowhere) until she appeared on their show. She wanted her being there to be a surprise. They announced early on that there would be a special guest coming up in the eighth inning, leaving the audience to surmise who that might be.

There would be other touches too in the final presentation of Ray's awards, including the retirement of his most appropriate of numbers, 50 that would then hang in SAFECO field along with that of Hank Aaron, Edgar Martinez and other Mariner greats. He had worn it at 48, 49, and 50. Now he was 51.

So when the bottom of the eighth came around Lesa Sorensen appeared in the booth with Joe and Tim. Joe was exuberant. Lesa was absolutely gorgeous, they both agreed. She delightfully demurred. It had been too long since Lesa had appeared on Joe Brett's Sports presentation. It had seemed to both him and Tim as though she belonged on every show when Ray Bonn stepped to the plate. In Major League Baseball the names of Ray Bonn and Doctor Lesa Landau/Sorensen would always belong together.

"Oh, please, could we just drop that former name altogether." She had heard Ray Bonn say one time that the greatest thing he had ever done was to help her sort out her past. "That is the kind of a guy Ray Bonn is," she said. "Let's just leave it sorted out, shall we." She smiled but she was serious. "Lesa Sorensen."

Ray's wife had died the previous winter, how had he taken that?

"Ray and Helen had shared their whole lives. Their parents had been close friends; they had been born at the same hospital less than 24 hours apart. Their lives together had demonstrated a love that is the rarest achievement of the human heart," Lesa sentimentalized with honesty. She had not meant to be quite so melodramatic but had gotten herself almost in tears recounting having watched that last World Series game with Helen on speaker phone.

Ray had been devastated by his loss and only recently had begun a life after Helen. "Teaching courses at Stanford University seems to have been very helpful to Ray in finding a little happiness as a physicist again."

She too had been teaching. It was at Harvard, was it not?

"Yes, I've taught at Harvard since the first of the year." She and Ray actually taught similar courses covering Ray's work in relativity and their shared work on irreversibility and entropy in thermodynamics for which the Nobel Committee had honored them both.

Between catching up on the intellectual lives of Ray and Lesa, three Mariners went out. Thus, after the Yankees were blanked in the top of the ninth it was once again looking dire.

Ray was, of course, the proverbial ninth inning clutch hitter, and heading into the bottom of the ninth down by three, either the Mariners got some runners on base or Ray's at bat wasn't going to mean much. Gala post-game festivities might not seem very festive in that case, but they would get him out there anyway on this day wouldn't they – as a last out if nothing else. "Oh, I would think so" Lesa said. If Mac Heller didn't put him up to bat, it wouldn't sit well with the fans. Mac had seemed on occasions past to excel in managing when Ray was sitting there on the top shelf waiting to be taken down and dusted off. One would have to think that they had compatible personalities, Lesa suggested.

With two out and only one man on, Mac paced in front of his players and seemed to be thinking about the possibility of using Ray just to give the retirement party something to celebrate. However, he seemed to have decided that Ray Bonn wouldn't even function well without the chance of a win being on the line. She saw him as under pressure withstanding the uproar of the crowd, "Ray Bonn, Ray Bonn, Ray Bonn."

Up to this point the game had been boring to say the least, and as color commentator she felt some pressure to provide some bit of color so she began commenting about what must be going on in the dugout. "You know, Ray told me once that he and Helen had this division of labor at their house in which Helen took care of all the finances, the running of their home and family, and in short, all the practical matters and decisions about the house. I think maybe he exaggerated a little though, don't you, Joe? Tim? That couldn't really happen in America, could it?"

Pleased with watching them look at each other and squirm guiltily, she added, "He did make his money, after all, well, the money he made before selling books and swinging a bat, as an engineer." After a pause she said, "And then as the inventor of a very practical electronic component." She laughed.

"He seems pretty handy with a bat," Joe contributed.

"Oh, and long before that he had become a journeyman carpenter working through high school and the University to support his family," Lesa inserted as possibly of further interest with regard to his ability to handle a piece of wood. She laughed, adding much to what had so-far been rather colorless sports commentating. "Anyway, Ray maintained that his responsibilities had been for the universe, its origin, its logical structure, the laws of nature, and in short, I guess, abstractions. He did realize that it was funny, by the way, but he felt guilty for being such a lazy slob and leaving all the hard work for Helen."

They shared a laugh at the inversion of usual perceptions of difficulty with Tim interjecting, "Sometimes you wonder how guilty God must feel!" into the hilarity.

"Quite."

After the colorful interruption Lesa continued, "But here we see Mac and Ray doing what each does best, applying what Ray knows about how the universe works to effect a desired result without having to call up a miracle. It is just physics after all. I think Mac is in tune with that."

They laughed as they teased about Ray's by now well-known edicts about the behavior of reality. She told them about what Mac had told Ray in New York before his second grand slam concerning a pitch down and away being the same as over the middle of the plate, if one took a different stance, having said, "It's just relativity after all."

They chuckled again at how Mac had been able to get into the spirit of Ray's thinking.

"But do you know what I've figured out about Ray and everyone else?" Lesa asked the two rhetorically.

They looked at her expectantly.

"Even physicists have fantasies, so whether it's a miracle or not misses the point really, it's more a matter of what kind of fantasy we choose to live in and who's willing to live in it with us. It's easy to get a lot of people to share a fantasy in baseball. Look at you guys; you've made careers of it and have got millions of people in on yours."

She laughed and they laughed at themselves.

"Mine, on the other hand, is rather private," she added coyly to which they guffawed.

While this was going on, what some would consider a miracle in the form of an infield error, by others just a difficult play that was not made, or (she 'hesitated' to say as she laughed aloud) the other players having been bribed to blow the game, there were two men on base. Maybe it had been the extremely loud booing that had the infield edgy Lesa had suggested finally. Again, Mac had a hard decision and again he held for winning. That was, after all, what Mr. Win was all about.

All these head-hopping suppositions and hypotheticals about what must be going on in Mac Heller's mind were being discussed with second guessing by Joe, Tim, and Lesa up in the booth. As they all discussed the various

improbabilities of Ray's consistently having had the bases loaded, Tim McCarthy was once again struck by the odds. True, Tim was a statistics man, and as Ray would have pointed out, you can't look at the odds of what has *actually* already happened; "that's looking down the wrong end of a telescope."

Bayes' theorem and her airtight contracts had almost guaranteed the bases would be loaded, Lesa reminded them. They weren't sure.

In any case Ray Bonn was coming to the plate one final time for real with a game on the line and the bases loaded against a new generation of Steinbrenners' Bronx Bombers. Ray could tell by watching his walk to the mound and the delay of a switch that the new skipper toyed with the idea of walking him. But they would have had to bring in bulldozers to clear the debris off the field if he had done that and he would have had to have been taken off under an armed guard, going down in infamy for ruining the retirement party of Ray Bonn. Maybe George had called down to the dugout to demand that they pitch to Ray. Not even the staunchest Yankee fans would ever have forgiven Yankee management for walking him this at bat, because Ray Bonn was after all, in some sense, theirs too. What Alturis Romero had experienced in Seattle with the boo-birds would have been nothing in comparison.

In the end Girardelli had opted instead to bring in their newest hurler sensation, called up mid-season just this year, who got the ball up to the plate at over a hundred miles an hour with some action on the ball. It would be a totally new look for Ray. That he would have lost a notch or two due to his advancing age would be why he was retiring. Jose Pasao once more had a snide comment for Ray. "Is this going to be a bunt, a blooper, or a bomb?"

Ray looked down disdainfully at the smirk behind the mask. "This," Ray smiled, "is going to be 'deja vu all over again'."

Ray didn't dislike Jose, or any of the Yankees any longer. It is a lesson learned as part of what Shaara called, *For the Love of the Game*. Yankees are just the most notable and noble opposition in this game; they are at the top of the mountain one attempts to climb. George Steinbrenner spent all that money just to provide that function.

As he had sat there between innings of this game, it had all been a musical whirl like in Billy Chapel's last game. He had respected friends on that other bench, and if they had not been so formidable what meaning would any achievement of his have ever had? It was defeating *them* that had made his reputation.

But the hurler now was new. Mareno Ricuzo was but a revered memory. The great ones come, and then they go. Someone new comes up. This guy was a lefty. The first pitch he threw was *heat* that swished across just in front of Ray's eyes to impress him, he supposed. It did.

"Ball one!"

The next pitch somehow curled back in from way outside away from him. Ray was certain it had been at least five inches off the plate, but it was "Strike One!" nonetheless.

Without even looking at the umpire this time Ray backed out of the batter's box and walked around to bat left-handed against this guy.

No one had hit one of his pitches out of a park yet, and in fact since he had been at the Major League level there had only been one hit, an infield hit by Hiro, by any left-handed batter.

All this was noted and annotated by Joe and Tim. Lesa was asked why she thought Ray would opt for the most difficult position from which to face this guy. "He must know the odds," Tim said. "Wouldn't you think?"

"Do you guys remember that game two years ago in New York?"

Of course they did. There was no one with 'baseball' in their vocabulary who didn't.

"Then you remember the ninth," Lesa said. "Well this is just 'deja vu all over again'."

Both men laughed, appreciating Lesa's allusion to one of the great Hall of Fame catchers, Yogi Berra's humorous comments. As they were laughing there was another windup.

Ray stood as far back from the plate as he could get – Mac's relativity at work Lesa supposed – and then came the very same pitch as the previous one, except that Mac Heller's pseudo relativity fixed it. Ray had swung out in front, but with his bat angled back so as not to pull it too far and foul it off. There was the now familiar crack of the bat and the ball soared high into the sky down the right field line. He had got under it a little; there was no doubt this guy was tough to hit. But when the towering fly ball came down it was barely inside the foul pole and just on the other side of the outstretched glove of the Yankee right fielder, between the wall and the first row of seats. It had barely cleared the wall and escaped the glove, although certainly memorable for its height.

Ray Bonn had indeed gone out with "deja vu all over again" as Joe and Tim were both gracious in conceding. Then with expected tears of joy duly noted by cameras, Lesa hurried away from the broadcast booth. She had things to do.

When the commotion had calmed down a little, Tim said, "Joe, you remember Iris in 'The Natural', Right? Well, she said, 'I hate to see a hero fail. There are so few of them.' Well, Ray is now a hero who will never have failed us. I imagine Lesa would say the same thing about her slugger, don't you? It's more than could have been said of Roy Hobbs, Joe Boyd, or certainly any real slugger. Ray Bonn is made of better stuff."

Joe nodded his head thoughtfully, "Now there's a testimonial for you." Then he asked in a simple matter of fact manner, "Where do you place this guy, Ray Bonn, after a few years, Tim? I mean after we've had time to think about it a little and videos of all his swings have been analyzed and re-analyzed to extract as much of the magic as possible? How's he compare with the Bambino or say, Barry Bond?"

"Joe, I'm not actually qualified to comment on the likes of Ray Bonn. He's in a realm I know nothing about. I think we should maybe let Roy Hobbs sum

it up in his words, when it comes to slugging, Ray Bonn is 'The best that ever played the game'. That's how good I think he is. We've lost a good one."

Joe stamped it, "It'd be tough for anyone to disagree with that, wouldn't it?"

Ray's relief was extreme. Going by third base he had slapped Alto's outstretched palm like a willed action in a lucid dream. The bat ceremony was re-enacted by Ray and Hiro one last time, one of the most memorable rituals of Major League Baseball coming to a close.

Interviewed after the game, of course, the reporter asked Ray if he had been aware of Helen "up there looking down on him."

Ray looked at the reporter disdainfully as one might inspect a spot of dirt, a bug, or a piece of lint, and said nothing.

"Well, I just thought..." the reporter mumbled.

"No, you didn't," Ray said scowling. "My Helen is *dead!* Do you have any idea what that means?" The reporter didn't like it but sucked it up.

The interview began all over again and very awkwardly this time. "We saw you talking to Jose at the plate; what was said in that conversation?"

Ray replied, "Jose just asked me whether I planned to go out with a bunt, a blooper, or a bomb."

"And how did you respond to that, Ray?"

"I just said that this was going to be 'deja vu all over again!'"

Up in the booth Joe Brett and Tim McCarthy looked at each other? "Isn't that just exactly what Lesa said, Joe?" Tim asked.

"It sure is, Tim! Those two are two peas in a pod, aren't they?"

"Yes indeed. Yes, indeedy, they are," Tim allowed. "But I've got a question for Ray. Could you guys hook me up?" Then when Ray had been given earphones, Tim continued, "Hi, Ray! This is Tim McCarthy up in the Hot Box Sports booth," he paused. "Can you hear me?"

"Hi, Tim," Ray responded to the sounds in his earphones and stared at the camera. "Yes, I can hear you just fine."

"That was another great swing, but I've got a question, Ray. Everyone knows your opinions about miracles and that it's all in the physics, so what I want to know is how your hitting ten grand slams – nine of them in a row – can be reconciled with statistical probabilities. It seems a little more than just improbable to me, Ray. It's downright impossible!"

"That's the wrong use of telescopes again, Tim."

Joe and Tim both laughed. "How can that be?" Joe asked. "Where's the telescope?"

"Well, Probability and impossibility apply to events that haven't happened yet. Statistics apply to large numbers of events – typically hundreds at least. You're asking about the probability of events after they've already occurred, aren't you? That's one hundred percent Tim. Probability doesn't apply. Let's say I had flipped a fair coin one hundred times and gotten one hundred heads

in a row. How would one square that with probabilities in your mind? Isn't that the essence of your question?"

"Yes! That *is* the question, Ray! How is it you could flip one hundred heads in a row?" Tim affirmed. And then, "and I'm betting you could do it."

"'How?' is a totally different question. What if I had flipped a head and a tail alternating until I had fifty heads and fifty tails? Would that bother you as much?" Ray asked.

"No, of course not! That's fifty-fifty, right on the law of averages!"

"How about five heads in a row followed by five tails, repeated ten times?"

"Law of averages again, Ray."

"Okay, Tim, your problem really is that you're confusing statistics with probabilities. You seem so comfortable with your law of averages, I'll bet you a million of my dollars that you can't get either one of those two combinations in ten twenty-four-hour days of trying. You want to take me on?"

"I don't have an extra million lying around, Ray."

"Well, you're wrong anyway, because all those cases – a hundred heads in a row, or a sequence of head-then-tail fifty times, fifty heads and then fifty tails, or five-and-five ten times in a row – have exactly the same likelihood. The only reason you think those cases are so much more likely is because they're similar to a kazillion other combinations that are also fifty-fifty. Statistics. Let me be more specific Tim; there are ten-to-the-twenty-ninth ways of getting fifty heads when you flip a coin a hundred times and only one combination of all heads or of fifty heads followed by fifty tails for that matter. But whatever *specific* combination of heads and tails that you get after a hundred flips of that coin will be exactly the same likelihood (probability) as the hundred heads. You flip a coin a hundred times and whatever sequence of heads and tails that you get will each have been exactly that unlikely. It's just that a lot of them are disguised by being similar to so many others. But there is a hundred percent chance you'll get some combination."

"You've got to be kidding me, Ray!" Tim was irritated.

"Nope. I'm not," Ray said, disgusted and reaching for his earphones seeming to be done with that little bit of idiocy.

Tim came back with, "Wait, Ray! That makes no sense! This kind of thing just doesn't happen!"

Ray seemed somewhat tired, as he replied, "Of course not. Your key phrase there was 'kind of thing', Tim. Classes of situations like flipping fifty heads in one hundred flips of a coin are phenomenally more likely than flipping all heads or all tails. But what you're missing here is that each one of those situations like, head-tail-tail-tail-head-head-tail-head... etc., is no more likely than flipping all heads. There are just more combinations that comprise the class involving exactly fifty *total* heads. There are kazillions of them, like I said. Does ten-to-the-twenty-ninth have any meaning for you, Tim? That's a digit followed by twenty-nine zeros. But whenever something *actually* happens, Tim, it is a *single* situation or sequence of events not disguised as a member of an entire class of similar combinations. Everything is unlikely,

Tim. *Everything!* That's one of life's most important lessons. When you flip a coin a hundred times, whatever you come up with will have defied odds of ten-to-the-thirty-second-to-one! I know it boggles the mind that there should be more ways of flipping a coin one hundred times than there are inches in the accepted circumference of the universe, but there are. There really are and don't doubt for a second whether the sequence you flip actually happened just because of that or you'll be classed as legally insane. *Something* happens, Tim. Always. It has to. One hundred percent. *That* is just physics."

Tim and Joe looked at each other, as baffled as a couple of ostriches blinking at a bright sun after pulling their heads out of the sand, wondering how on earth this sports program got so far off in that direction.

The reporter on the field laughed terminating the interview with a begrudging, "Thank you, Ray. You have certainly entertained us these last two years."

Ray thought of a lot of sarcastic rebuttals, but luckily, "Thank you" was all that came out.

But Tim had gotten a second wind. "Ray, please listen to me. A fifty-year-old who hasn't swung a bat in thirty years comes up from the sticks and gets to swing a bat at Yankee Stadium. Doesn't it make sense to ask, 'What're the odds of him hitting a home run?'"

"Sure," Ray acknowledged. "What did you place those odds at?"

"So close to zero you couldn't measure the difference," Tim emphasized.

"Me too," Ray agreed. "Well, close enough for government work. That's why that country bumpkin was so pissed off at being put into that situation, Tim." Ray laughed. "He really doesn't like striking out."

"But he hit a home run, Ray. How do you explain that?"

"We were wrong, Tim, dead wrong. You've never been wrong before? We each used what we knew at the time to compute the odds, probabilities. You just placed them a lot closer to zero than I did," Ray continued laughing.

"Yeah, but now you're saying we weren't even making sense."

"No, no, Tim. We were dealing with a hypothetical then. Odds apply to hypotheticals, not actuals. There's a category error here, Tim. You've seen the movie, *The Sting*, right?"

"Yeah, sure."

"After they've run the race and you know the result, it's no longer fair to ask someone to bet against you on a long shot. Right? Guess why? Let's go back to physics, Tim. In quantum theory the probability of every possible outcome progresses with separate wave functions as if each might be the eventual outcome. When a measurement occurs, the waves of all but the one that actually happened 'collapse'. Poof! They're gone, and you know what? They never actually existed at all. They were just hypothetical.

"That's physics, Tim.

"All the overwhelmingly many ways in which I could have failed at the plate have all collapsed now, Tim. They never even existed at all. I could have walked, struck out, been hit by a pitch and killed, lined out, popped out, flied

out, hit a grounder and been thrown out, or just insulted the umpire and got thrown out on my ear. What kind of odds would you have given for each one of those? Striking out was probably your favorite, but in retrospect, the odds of that shouldn't have been very high, do you think? You were wrong. I had more data than you. I was always pretty good at hitting baseballs - a long way, Tim. Every one of the other supposed options had a lower probability 'cause I always swung for the fences," he paused, "except for that one time, of course. The only way this charade kept happening was if all the other possibilities didn't happen; those were the rules of Lesa and George's crazy game. Since none of them happened it kept going. It was rigged, Tim; let it go. Have a nice day."

Ray handed the earphones back to the reporter and started to walk away when the reporter stopped him. "Tim has another question," he said.

"Ray, I'm sorry, but fans deserve a better answer. No other living soul will ever match this performance. You have to know that. How do you as a physicist square that in your own mind."

Ray was exasperated; this was no part of any contract. Tim, you admit I had a chance of hitting a home run, right?"

"Yes."

"Okay, take that number and multiply it by itself nine times. That's the lower bound of the answer."

"But..."

"Tim, have you ever heard of the 'infinite monkey' theorem, which says that a monkey hitting keys on a keyboard at random for an infinite period of time will eventually type out the King James version of the bible?"

"Yes. Are we going there?"

"Only because you insist." Ray virtually sneered. "We don't know when that most unlikely sequence will occur, whether his first several million key strokes or after a trillion years, but it will almost certainly happen." He paused. "Luckily in the case of the bumpkin's home run sequence, it happened early on. And there's corollary to that theorem, Tim, which states that if the monkey in question likes pink and we paint the 'E' and 'T' keys pink, the holy book will be much more likely. For the bumpkin, fences are pink Tim. Got it?"

"No, I don't Ray, but we have to get off the air." Tim had given up and was laughing along with Joe and everyone who watched.

"Good. Maybe you ought to spend some time addressing the odds of the bases having been loaded each time the bumpkin came up in that game. Maybe you can use statistics to solve that problem Tim." He handed the earphones to the reporter and strode off.

Getting back to an empty dugout he was in a very bad mood; he knew he had been a pompous asshole... again... worse than ever, another major reason for fans not to like him... for him not to like himself, for Lesa to read him the riot act... again.

What if twisting his wrist had resulted in a pop up that first at bat in Yankee Stadium? Or what if the ball had lodged in the webbing of Hidalgo Manuel's

glove? Those were millimeter misses. If that first flip of his 'fair coin' had turned up tails, what then? It would have been over; never another at bat. It was in the contract for God sake. Who would Ray Bonn have been then? That's a question everyone asks themselves all the time. What if?

Wasn't it pompous of him to have even spoken of a *fair* coin? There was nothing fair about it. How had he even gotten an at bat at Yankee Stadium? Wasn't Lesa's handing him that coin a magical thing in itself, not just another fortunate outcome of the flip of a *fair* coin? Nor could he have shared a Nobel Prize without her sprinkling magic fairy dust all over them both.

After all, wasn't a 'fair' coin defined as one for which one hundred heads in a row does *not* happen – very often. And what about each subsequent flip of that coin? Any one of those flips coming up tails would have terminated the phenomenon now known as Ray Bonn. Ray Bonn was not some metaphysical being standing back behind a protective glass like Maxwell's daemons watching the coin flipping; he *was* the coin flipping. He was the outcome of all the contingent coin tosses; anything else was the most flagrant fallacy of looking down the wrong end of telescopes.

Thus, disconsolate with improbabilities, he began thinking of Helen his 'only-child twin'. Had Ray *felt* her up there looking down? How utterly absurd. All that was left of Helen was up on the ridge overlooking the Canyon Creek Reservoir, not up in the rafters of SAFECO Field for Christ's sake. She was lying flat on her back in a coffin facing up into the void... rotting. 'She?' No, she wasn't lying up there. Only what was left of her body was up there. None of the molecules and atoms of which 'Helen' was now composed... or decomposed... had even been a part of the charming child whom he had grown up 'loving', nor even of the Homecoming Queen to whom he had first 'made love'. The aging Helen, whose death had devastated him, was physically completely different than all the earlier Helen's, even if continuously recognizable in form, a beautiful form now vanished from heaven and earth.

He was completely devoid of thoughts for a few moments of meditative incomprehension.

Then the improbabilities of the origin of the 'only-child twins' that Helen had related to him intruded on his thoughts. On that night so long ago when their mothers had supposedly conspired unbeknownst to their unsuspecting, but eager, husbands to synchronously conceive children so that Helen and he could grow up together.

So what? Over several nights each of their fathers had probably contributed a quarter of a billion unique haploid possibilities from which their conspiratorial mothers could pretend to 'plan' their families. At conception each of their parents contributed a haploid cell that was only one of many millions of possible combinations of chromosomes in their own individual genetic make up, not counting the inevitable crossover that occurs during meiosis, further complicating the picture.

On one surreal conspiratorial night there had been on the order of ten-to-the-thirtieth power of possible sets of 'only-child twin' zygotes anxious to be

realized instead of just Helen and him. If all these quasi actualized contenders had stood in line, hands locked, to try out for the roles in the 'only child twins' production, the line would have extended hundreds of times further than the accepted diameter of the universe itself – even if Ray did not accept that particular limitation as fact. All but Helen and he had been turned away, losers, with no 'right to life'. Was it for bad acting? No, just the fickleness of fate. He and Helen had been lucky to be the ones to have won the lottery to live at all.

After a moment's silent meditation, his mind raced on. Helen had been only one in ten-to-the-fifteenth of the possibilities for whom she might have been. Ray noted after a brief calculation that the earth had a surface area of about ten-to-the-thirteenth square feet. Therefore, if all these possible Helens had been realized and stood with arms at their sides, packed in like sardines as close as they would fit on an earth without oceans, it would take hundreds of earths just to contain them. Grieving for each of them was beyond the capability of the human heart... truly overwhelming grief. Honest pro-lifers must be a very sad lot.

How many in that combinatorial DNA lottery of only-child-twins would have been as compatible and could have experienced the joy that he and Helen had in actuality? The sequence of intermittent joy and sorrow had been essential to their roles. How many of the alternative Helens would have knocked Cousin Julie on her butt in those key lines of her role? Those were all non-questions. He could not "feel" anything for any or all of those hapless souls "looking down" on this, their sole sullen unelected representative who had been lucky from the beginning. One must let them all go to whatever nether world reclaims collapsed wave functions and lost possibilities. The tragedy of not having lived at all. One had to let them all go – even the actual Helen now.

Ray was glad he hadn't broached these topics for the reporter on national TV. It would have been even worse than what he had done with Tim. They would have hauled him off in a straight jacket. But nothing Ray ever said was intelligible to hardly anyone anyway. Just Lesa.

Finally, in a more sanguine frame of mind, he looked out into the real world he had luckily been brought into up in the hospital in Concrete to experience all its sensations. He realized now as a continuation of these sensations that the Mariners must indeed be putting on some special celebration. Cecil was yelling for him to come onto the field where a stand had been swiftly put in place in the infield. There would evidently be a concert performed. A grand piano was all trussed up and helplessly being hoisted to the platform. It dangled very un-classically from cables; he sympathized with the piano's restriction to using classical physics to resist this charade of performing in a most unlikely situation, denied by its very size the privilege of quantum tunneling to the outside of this stadium. He felt the indignity almost personally, knowing that the forces of the mechanisms arrayed against it were too great. It would have to perform even in this inhospitable environment.

Watching the suspended instrument reminded him of Lesa singing *I Needed You* as Cynthia played her grand piano in their 'cottage' up near Boston so long ago now. Ray wished he had asked Lesa to come today. He thought now of her falling into his lap with her arm around his neck as she had hung on his neck another time in their suite at the Sheltry Hotel maintaining that *she* was this Ancient Mariner's "bird of good omen". She had been. She would have enjoyed an occasion like this; it would have made it better. He wasn't up to this on his own. He needed her – one more flip of the magic coin. But he had known that they couldn't trust each other in public. But who really cared?

Cecil had taken the opportunity to join Ray in the dugout. While Cecil explored the dugout, Ray still sat distracted on the back bench, one last time waiting to be taken down and used. That bench had seemed to be the closest analogy to a church pew he had ever occupied... here inside the fantasy beyond the double blue doors of the church of reason – the one seen when looking into Lesa's mesmerizing eyes. She had put him here.

Thus, once again Ray waited for his moment, a benediction of which he would be the principal – the ancient Mariner whose tale seemed now to have been told. But why had he been left here alone? He began to look around; there were people looking at him suspiciously or like they knew something he didn't. They smiled at Cecil and him.

#18 Together Again

Unlike his childish debate with Tim McCarthy and the deeper confused rant within his own mind, the rest of that day of celebrating the retirement of his number 50 jersey at SAFECO Field, Ray would always remember fondly. He had had no idea that Lesa was there or that she had choreographed much of the proceedings of the entire day. He should have, of course, but he hadn't. It seemed to be an aspect that she shared with Helen with regard to piloting Ray through a life that would have been intolerable for him otherwise. The grief-stricken gap between them that had seemed an interminable hell had convinced him of how desperately he needed her now.

He would remember with embarrassment that ridiculous conversation with Tim McCarthy about probabilities and statistics. Oh, God, that was awful. Later it would seem incomprehensible to him that he could sit there watching that whole procedure of the piano dangling down to the stage without catching on with regard to what would transpire, or even remember in detail the last time he had even seen a grand piano. He realized that watching the suspended instrument should have immediately reminded him of Lesa singing "I Needed You" as Cynthia played her grand piano in their 'cottage' up near Boston so long ago and that she might just do it for him now. But he didn't.

Since he had never demonstrated such pleasure at hearing a grand piano at any other juncture in his life, why would he not have suspected that it was Lesa who had arranged that? No one else would even have suspected how much he liked it. Sometimes his own gullibility simply amazed him. But he hadn't known.

Ray had watched his entire family being escorted out onto the field; they walked toward the platform ignoring him and Cecil, so he eventually quitted his miserable cogitations to walk out of the dugout hand in hand with Cecil to greet them. He told Allie as he hugged her that he wished Lesa had been there and she implied vaguely that it would have been nice.

Dave Niehauser introduced the entire Bonn mob to the fans in case they hadn't remembered them from the previous year. The family was told to stand off to the side but still on stage. Then they had Mac Heller lined up to say a few words and give Ray his World Series ring.

Realizing what was coming in that regard, Ray began thinking about the conversation he and Lesa had had earlier in the spring when they had begun

conversing once again. She had made an issue of not having seen the previous ring and having wanted to when she had visited Helen, asking him whether he wore it, knowing full well that he wouldn't have.

Anyway... Mac's were very nice words including, "what a pleasure it has been to have had someone in the lineup that you knew would win a big game for you just by being there."

Digressing in thought again, he wondered where the earlier ring he had received had been placed. Helen must have placed it somewhere where she would have thought it belonged. Where would that have been? It must have been Allie who had found it after Helen died and had put it on the mantel with the souvenir grand slam balls. Ray remembered seeing it there after his return from California and had thought it a beautiful thing. Now Mac gave him this second World Series ring. Maybe he should have worn the other one today. Probably. He thought again of Lesa's having mentioned that other ring and not having seen it when she was there with Helen. It nagged at him even as he stood beside Mac, why would that have been an issue. Women and rings. Aspergers, damn it.

Then Hiro got up and said something briefly about how surprised and impressed he had been with Ray Bonn. He humorously stated how much he had appreciated the respect Ray had given his bats. There was much applause for Hiro's comments.

Mariners management did the jersey retirement thing, and then Commissioner Bud Heidegger said some flattering words on behalf of all of baseball, giving Ray yet another award for something or other. His family told him afterwards what it was for, it hadn't registered right then, in the meantime he had just been blandly grateful in any case. He had had that reinforced by thinking again of his rant with Tim earlier. It shouldn't matter much from here on out, he had thought but knew that it always matters.

The music had begun, amplified to flood the stadium with sound, and instead of a crash-bang metal band, what filled the arena were notes from the grand piano that he had seen forced onto stage. The first strains of *You Needed Me* filled the air so that he turned around quickly, seeing Lesa standing there in all her amazing beauty wearing a white gown with sequins, smiling behind the microphone. Her big blue eyes directed at him. Sitting at the grand piano behind her, was Cynthia. The old sugar sweet adage of dying and going to heaven could not have been as wonderful as what saturated his senses.

There needed to be a Sargent to paint this Ray thought at the time. If Sargent had been alive Ray would have commissioned it. He could afford it. That's what he was thinking with both women beaming as they proceeded with the performance. Ray walked over toward Lesa; his arms outstretched like a downs syndrome child he supposed... wide open. This was *their* song:

*I cried a tear
You wiped it dry
I was confused*

*You cleared my mind
I sold my soul
You bought it back for me
And held me up and gave me dignity
Somehow you needed me.*

At that point Lesa leapt into his arms with typical abandon, having first put the microphone down on the piano. Someone had run up to hold it for Cynthia who seamlessly took up a few frames of the melody while Lesa was temporarily unable to perform.

When they broke their embrace with Ray still beside Lesa, his arm around her waist, she gracefully took back the microphone with tears in her eyes to complete *their* song. As they neared the last lines Ray had uninhibitedly begun to sing along with her, so Lesa lowered her voice a little and pushed the microphone closer to Ray so that they continued the duet together:

*You gave me strength
To stand alone again
To face the world
Out on my own again
You put me high upon a pedestal
So high that I could almost see eternity*

Lesa went silent letting Ray solo, "*You needed me.*" He had looked at her somewhat startled. A thought crossing his mind concerning what Tim would think the odds of this would have been? Tim would be gagging.

Then he was silent watching her as she sang her line, "*You needed me*" before both repeating the line a final time.

When the lyrics had been completed and Cynthia's final rococo flair was done, the couple strolled together to the podium where Ray grabbed onto the microphone. "My friends," he said, "this is Lesa Sorensen who made all this happen but has never before showed her face here in Safeco field."

Applause began again. With his arm still securely around Lesa, as soon as the noise had abated a bit, he turned motioning toward the piano, "Thank you Cynthia Sorensen for your beautiful rendition of one of Lesa's and my favorite songs," more applause. He looked around for Fredrick; he was next to Ray's boys. Ray motioned him over to which he just stepped forward a step upon which Ray introduced him as Lesa's father.

While this was going on Ray slipped the World Series ring incongruously onto the third finger of Lesa's left hand. She clasped her fist tightly around the huge ring so it wouldn't slide off and she kissed him before a cheering audience. After the cheering had died down a bit, Ray motioned with the tipping of his head for her to say something into the microphone. Not one to avoid prime time, Lesa spoke: "For forcing Ray Bonn into a Mariners uniform, I can only plead, 'Guilty as charged!' You're truly welcome, Seattle. Good

luck to the Mariners and all us fans the rest of this year and in the years to come. Ray and I will always be loyal Mariner fans." She waved leaving the microphone to Ray.

He gave the microphone back to Dave Niehauser, who just for the record said, "Get out the rye bread and mustard grandma, we've just had another grand salami!"

"With snake oil," Ray could not avoid thinking at that moment. He was suddenly exhausted.

Lesa had put her arms around his neck impeding their progress as they walked back to their families. She whispered, "I think that was more words than I've ever heard you speak at one time;" then after a pause, "except maybe down on the Oregon coast."

He cringed before replying, "Oh Lesa, you should have heard me earlier with Tim; it was awful."

She laughed, "You needed me, didn't you?"

The Bonns, Sorensens, and close friends had all congregated at Ray's home afterward to goodies provided by Allie, Judy, and Eddie's Lisa. Allie had unobtrusively done up the bedrooms in the house so Lesa's parents, Eddie and Lisa, and Edna and Sharon could all stay over. Ray was surprised at how happy he was to see Edna again in particular. She proposed the trip to Paris to promote French translations of the books, fulfilling her promise to Lesa.

Ray and Lesa were inseparable as they walked through the rooms discussing items of interest to them both. He showed her the first World Series ring where it was now mounted on the mantle. Allie was there with them right then, so Ray asked her where she had found it.

"Oh, it was in the center drawer of Mom's desk."

"Should we free up your left hand a little by depositing the one you're wearing right next to it now, Lesa? Or do you want a handful of promise?"

"I'll just hold this one till you get me a proper replacement, Ray," she said, kissing him.

"Yeah, that is what I meant," he said.

"Was I to infer that up on the stage this afternoon?"

"Yes, of course. You will marry me, won't you?"

"Yeeah" she mocked. "I thought you'd never ask."

Then they strolled out among the ponds. She had his arm locked between hers and her breast in the intimate way she had done it right after they had first met. As they walked across the little bridge by the koi pond Ray related to her how he had come out here after sensing her aroma after she and Helen had gotten together. How he had looked at the colorful koi thinking about how she would have looked at them thinking about how he... two parallel mirrors."

"I did, Ray. That is exactly what I was thinking as I walked out here while Helen was sleeping. Of you and how you would think of the visitation just the same as I would."

They stopped their strolling to reminisce occasionally. When she pressed against him as they kissed after just reentering the house, she felt him pressing back, a crescendo of excitement. It felt wonderful to them both to feel their love again.

"You're going to have to forget that incident with Cousin Julie tonight, Ray." She watched shadows play on his forehead like ripples on the pond with all the colors underneath until they dissipated whereupon she kissed him again.

"I don't know," he said, "Floozy Julie was pretty special in a lot of ways. There have been times I wished Helen had kept her big mouth shut that time. That initiated the big wait for me. But seriously, Lesa, Julie was more than boobs. There is a lot to like about Julie."

"You're referring among other things to her having introduced you two 'only-child twins' to that book by Reich I'll bet?" Lesa asked. "'America is dealing in death... and all that,'" she proudly proclaimed, displaying the extent of her overlap with Helen's thinking. "I read it after Helen told me how you quoted it to her whenever she would ask you to."

"Yes, I was referring to that. I more or less promised Helen I'd try to do something political to promote her vision that derived from all those meaningful experiences."

"Allie and I promised her too," Lesa said to Ray's amazement. "I think we can get something started, don't you, Ray? I actually talked to Julie about it after the funeral. She has some good ideas. We need to get with her sometime." They kissed long and passionately again as they entered the bedroom from the back deck.

Edna peeked around the corner coming out of the hall bathroom, and upon seeing that they had seen her watching them, she poked her finger toward her open mouth as though gagging. They shared laughs, Lesa and Ray both realizing at that moment that they could probably get Edna to help too. That would definitely help an organization get under way.

"I still want that trip to Paris," Lesa told Edna, and looking at Ray said, "A belated honeymoon maybe?"

"A honeymoon," he said. "Sure. Set it up for us, would you, Edna?"

They returned to the living room then where the rest were all sitting around in various pleasant conversations concerning aspects of their various family histories and relationships of mutual interest. Everyone seemed to enter into everyone else's stories happily ignoring the two lovers. Fredrik seemed particularly at ease and pleased as he occasionally looked over at Ray and Lesa.

After they had sat on one of the couches consumed exclusively by each other a little while, Eddie's Lisa interrupted them to ask Ray if he remembered what Helen had asked him as they watched Lesa give her Nobel address.

"Yeah, I do," he recalled.

Lisa stated for all to hear, "Helen said, 'You didn't tell her' – meaning the other Lesa – 'the whole story, did you, Ray?'"

"Yeah. That's what she said."

Lesa's features jerked showing interest in what she had not been told, and therefore could not have related accurately to the whole known world.

"Yes," Lisa said, "That is what she said, but you didn't answer. You both just smiled at each other. Remember?"

Ray smiled again, remembering that wonderful other woman.

"Can you tell us the whole story now, Ray?" Lesa entreated him while yet realizing it might have been a private moment of Ray and Helen's that was not to be shared. Ray also recalled Lesa's why-don't-you-go-into-the-other-room-and-close-the-door respect for Ray and Helen's privacy.

Everyone in the room had now turned to them, "Yeah, would you, Ray?"

Andrew Watt spoke up, "I don't know, Ray, I'm the friend who is the brunt of that joke, aren't I? I know what you said and I've never told."

"You are that friend, Andrew, that great friend, who pushed me into getting a patent that supported my retirement, who pushed me into publishing a book, that got everything else in gear. And yes, you're the one who pushed with the cattle prod right into my dreams to force them on me."

"Well, I'm proud of it then!" Andrew said with everyone gathered laughing and reinforcing in one way or another how truly important he had, therefore, been to them all. "And I was manager of the group in five years."

"So sure," Ray said smiling at Lesa. "But do you remember the situation when I told you what you related to the whole damn world in that fabulous speech of yours?"

"Yes," she twinkled in her sequin dress. "We were at the Sheltry after that second Larry King Live appearance on one of very few congenial occasions during those days when we were not at each other's throats." She smiled, obviously having forgiven him long ago and having assumed that he had forgiven her as well. "I had just confided in you that I had often dreamed of winning the Nobel Prize, and you went on and on about how I needed to be a co-author on the *Origins of Irreversibility* so that we would both have a shot at having that experience. Remember?"

He echoed her smile. "Yeah, and I was right, but you wouldn't budge," he scolded. She just smiled sheepishly, glancing up at Fredrik who smiled back knowingly.

"When I asked you if you had ever dreamed of winning that prize," she said. "You told me that story then. What's the *rest* of it, Ray?"

"Well, it's a long story..." he smiled as though beginning one of his occasional shaggy dog rants. "As I told you back then... and as you told everyone else in Stockholm, so I won't repeat the beginning of how Andrew here had gotten me so agitated by insisting that I knew precisely all my aspirations for the future.

"What you want to know is the part I was afraid to tell the premier tar baby manufacturer of the western world. In particular, what else I had told Andrew in the heat of that moment.

"You all have to remember that baseball had been a pretty major part of my early life until I graduated from high school. I had placed a lot of hopes

on old Jonesy making it big in the big leagues. I even dreamed that when they realized what a big star he turned out to be," and his eyes illustrated the disappointment Jonesy had, in actual fact, turned out to be, "that they'd call me up too."

Lesa, sensing the gist of what was coming, began laughing and poking him saying, "You bastard! You lil' Brer Rabbit bastard, you. 'No, no, no. Anywhere but the briar patch, Brer Fox. No, no, no, not an at bat in Yankee Stadium, anything but that, Brer Fox.'"

There was a roar of laughter in the room.

"Are you done?" Ray sputtered out loudly, still laughing and trying to avoid her index finger being driven into his ribs.

"Well, getting to the plate in Yankee Stadium isn't *really* anybody's dream, especially when you're over the hill and not ready for it, Lesa, now is it? Any more than writing a paper on thermodynamics is anyone's dream. Dreams involve payoff! So sure, the dream of my early life was a walk-off home run in a World Series. I must have dreamed that ten or twenty times when I was young."

"And you wouldn't tell me that just to ease my mind a little and relieve some of the tension we were going through? That was just mean Ray! And you're still young, Ray. Don't forget that."

"Yeah, well... I was still dreaming that dream occasionally fifteen years ago when Andrew was goading me. So anyway, when I was unloading on Andrew, I hit him with the three bigees. What I told him was that in five years I'd have liked to have 'won the Nobel Prize in physics, hit a walk off home run in the seventh game of a World Series, and...' it embarrassed me then and it still does. '... be filthy rich.'" They all roared.

"That's what Mom was referring to?" Allie asked, and Ray nodded. "Is that how you remember it, Andrew?" she asked to get it confirmed.

"Yep. That was it," Andrew verified. "One crazy man your father, and crude insensitive me taking advantage of poor sensitive Ray."

"And you argued with your agent that you didn't want to go up to bat in either of those two World Series! Both Helen and I had to fight with you to get you to," Lesa said. "You lied to me, Ray. You flat out lied to me."

"Oh, no, no, Sis'r Fox, or is it Sis'r *Hot Box Sports*" he teased, grabbing Lesa to kiss her as one might hopelessly try to push the cork back into a freshly opened champagne bottle.

"So, you've realized all your dreams?" Allie asked, perhaps too consciously ignoring their escapades.

Turning to face Allie for a moment, he said, "Yeah, most of them. Ten or twenty years late and in reverse order." Then he added as he looked over toward Lesa, "Now I am beginning to realize a bunch more."

"With me?" Lesa continued smiling, "In Paris?"

"Yeah. If Edna gets off her duff and puts it together."

"It's together," Edna said. "Just give me the dates. Oh, and I'm going with. Did I tell you that, Ray? Runny omelets every morning – yummy."

After a bit more of the banter about the honeymoon Ray raised his voice to say, "Plus, Lesa and I are going to try to implement someone else's vision for a change. Helen's. 'There are more things in heaven and earth,' than we had dreamt, more worthwhile dreams to dream than I ever thought possible."

Fredrik had asked what they saw as being involved in that elevated mission to which Ray responded, "I've always shunned politics, Fredrik, but... ."

"You're *not* going into politics!" Eddie emphasized. "Please, God," he added humorously, "don't let him go into politics."

"No, no, of course not. But there are causes into which your mother thought I should have put some effort – to say nothing of a little more cash, and maybe reputation – into trying to help."

"Political causes cover a lot of ground," Fredrik said.

"You gonna save the whale?" Eddie asked.

"Maybe," Ray said. "I don't know. Lesa and I have agreed to look into what is most urgent."

"Where will you start?" Fredrik asked, genuinely interested now.

"Helen's cousin, Julie – you met her at the funeral, remember Cynthia?" It was Lesa responding.

"Oh, yes. A very intelligent and caring woman." Cynthia replied and Ray found that he had to rid himself of Cousin Julie images and start all over as if it were someone totally different.

"Well, Helen evidently worked with Julie some on political causes. Julie is very active in liberal causes now."

It was a situation of which Ray had been unaware. Ray had not seen or heard of Julie from Helen in years.

"Why liberal?" Edna asked.

"Because we're not mean," Ray offered humorously, to which Edna frowned with irritation as an only rebuttal.

As verbal response, Andrew asked, "Are liberal causes the only ones that aren't mean? That are worthwhile? Is lowering taxes so bad?"

"Right," Sharon entered the conversation. "I think I pay enough."

And then Tom was in there with some comment resonating with the other practicing physician in the room.

"Wait, wait, wait," Lesa raised her voice. "We don't intend to raise anybody else's taxes. We're just looking into where we should tax ourselves. Where can we be of the most help... in a way that Helen would have approved. Anyway, Ray and I have not worked this out yet. All we know is that we want Helen's wishes to be honored."

"Good idea," Allie said. "I have a whole file of Mom's stuff up in that file cabinet in Lisa and Eddie's room. I think she kept all her pet projects up there. I'd like to help if I can by the way."

"So would I," a now obviously pregnant Lisa said. "Eddie and I have some friends down in San Jose who are pretty active in this sort of thing."

"Why not," Jamie said. "Sounds like a fun family project to me. Maybe we could get a Bonn Foundation going if we do it before people forget who the Bonn's are."

"Or before they remember who they used to be," Ray added cynically to disgusted sidelong glances. "Well," he added to quell the storm, "it was a Bonn that Helen and Julie began demonstrating against." He let it go.

Lesa was getting enthused, he could tell. But this was getting out of control – or so Ray thought.

Cynthia asked about the possibility of a Boston affiliate to which Fredrik and Lesa showed enthusiasm.

Lesa was really getting into it. "Listen," she said. "I'll see whether we can get Julie up here to discuss it with us. You and Eddie talk to your friends about it, Lisa. See if they want to join in.

"Do you know how to get a foundation started, maybe through the university, Jamie?"

"Do you, Judy?" he asked his tremendously bulging wife. She knew someone who did, and the conversation had gone on... and on.

So that was more or less how Lesa had been integrated into the Bonn family unit, a simple matter of the Bonn family accepting her control, Ray thought, amused. She had immediately assumed a central role in the family drama, the understudy stepping in and performing magnificently.

It had seemed like most of the women in the house that night, that first night he and Lesa had been together in over a year other than a funeral hug, that long night after his retirement extravaganza had all been pregnant. Helen would have been overjoyed. Pregnancy seemed always to bring out the happy streak in her Ray thought. Both Cynthia and Fredrik were ecstatic at the prospects of their new baby. Judy's happily expected twins, and Lisa's Elizabeth Marie. Since that occasion Judy, Lisa, and Cynthia had all had their babies, Lesa assisting with each situation, quite the little volunteer midwife learning the ropes. But we're not there yet.

When they finally went to bed that night of the celebration, no one was prudish enough to suggest that since the couple had not secured formal legal papers that it might be inadvisable for them to meet conjugally that night. More significantly, and surprisingly, nor did Ray's inhibitions perform such a role on this occasion. He and Lesa melted into each other's arms and charms and reveled in being together in the same universe with now and forever taking on a proper meaning for them.

Lesa lavished Ray with kisses both before and after the more traditional marriage night ritual had been consummated, falling eventually into that little heavy breathing phenomena that served as her method of snoring that Ray had observed the first night he had met her.

Next morning when they arose after sharing a certain amount of that same fervor again, Lesa stepped into a cheering kitchen where other ladies of the

family had a delightful Sunday brunch laid out within minutes of their being up and about. It was fun. Ray even thought it was fun.

He was able to spend some time discussing Eddie's academic progress. Eddie purveyed an informal thank you from the physics department and word from other faculty members who wished to be mentioned to him on this occasion.

Lengthy conversations with each of Lesa's adoptive parents, both together and individually, Ray found most enjoyable. They were both dear friends of his. Sometimes Lesa was party to these conversations, but more often she was off talking with others who populated the large house, establishing herself as the Lady of the house. Ray found out that Lesa and Cynthia had not been able to do the Space Needle when they had been here in December, so they must all do it before the Sorensens left to go back to the North East. They would plan to do it next week.

Cynthia, Lisa, with Lesa and Allie, arranged how the wedding would take place. When Ray got with Lesa alone he indicated, that he'd like to remain involved in that activity and that he had definite ideas as least as far as what he did *not* want to happen with that ceremony. He requested that he at least be asked or told about some of this stuff before they became fact. Allie was not his proxy in this matter. Ray could see that she had become quite enamored with Lesa. They had obviously bonded during the days he had been kidnapped to Stanford. He wondered how that could have produced such a secure bond when it had been Allie, probably more than any of his children, who had objected so vociferously to that early phase of his and Lesa's strange relationship.

Lesla exuded so much energy that neither serenity nor quiet desperation could ever have been said to take root anywhere near her, Ray thought. Ray's grandchildren were overwhelmed with her. For Stephanie a lifelong friendship had begun, one in which Lesa's advice would be the ultimate oracle of what was right and proper in any situation. Rays role, as being nearest to her, in the very penumbra of all that radiant energy so to speak, seemed to turn him into a vibrant host himself. But mostly he watched and followed, happy to help the woman he loved to realize all her wishes.

#19 *“The bridegroom’s doors are opened wide”*

For Ray’s story to have any meaning at all, he realized that there must be a wedding if there is to be a role for a bedraggled Ancient Mariner wandering about on the loose talking with all these guests. The fact that the role of the ancient mariner did not encompass that of bridegroom in Coleridge’s rime destroyed the exactness of the analogy, but that fact was one with which Ray felt license could be taken as though ‘twere but a minor point.

*“The bridegroom’s doors are opened wide,
And I am next of kin;
The guests are met, the feast is set:
May’st hear the merry din.”*

So there was at long last, it seemed to Ray, a setting for the narrative of Ray Bonn. He felt unworthy of the enhanced significance of his role in this particular production, what he might on other occasions have called a mere ‘charade’, but happy. Yes, quite happy. Charades of the past that Lesa had forced upon him had proven to be more than a little advantageous to him, and so it was easy enough to subdue apprehensions with regard to this particular production.

The progress on the thinking of this matter became the buzz in the house. It was quickly decided that the following Saturday was a good date for everyone. The women proceeded from that fact to assemble all the little facts of which a wedding is comprised. Since it would be a private occasion with only immediate family and friends there were no announcements to be mailed out and much of the formality that occupies mothers and daughters for months of preparations could be foregone. Cynthia did relish the idea of helping Lesa though and the week of everyone being together in the same house made for many memorable occasions, even if it did not provide the quiet contentment of just being with Lesa that Ray had longed for. That could come later.

There were notebooks being bandied about with lists assigned to the several women involved. Edna seemed to be the organizer of those who were organizing everything else. Ray laughed to himself thinking about it.

Lesa had decided on Sharon and Stephanie as bride’s maids. Both of them were puffed up with pride in their roles. Lesa asked Ray about a best man.

“Andrew, I guess,” he had said.

“Well, you better call him up and tell him then,” she said.

He did, arranging to meet him for lunch on Monday. They had not resumed their occasional habit of meeting for lunch since he had come back from Stanford, but it had always been a ritual they both enjoyed.

That arrangement had to be changed to accommodate shopping with Lesa for a dress and rings on Monday. Didn't he know some of that had to be done as soon as possible? No, of course he hadn't. “The only other wedding I've ever had was a hush hush thing just to cover up an earlier hush hush thing,” he told Lesa.

“Yes, yes, I know. Well, I'm no expert at this either, but these women are, so let's just roll with the flow this week. Is that okay?”

“Sure.”

“You have to get us a Justice of the Peace or a preacher of your choice to come here on Saturday, Ray.” She kissed him. “Thank you for letting this all happen. I am so happy!”

“Yeah. Me too.”

So he called Andrew back, told him what the occasion had been, that he would like him as best man and that the lunch had better wait until some of the pandemonium had subsided down this serene little street.

Andrew was overjoyed. “Gosh, that's nice,” is what he had said. Ray laughed whenever he thought about it.

Then he attempted to reserve space at the space needle for a groom's dinner on Friday evening. There would not be room enough for the number he requested on such short notice, they informed him initially. However, when “a certain Bonn party” was explained to be “the Ray Bonn groom's dinner ‘party,’” that was different. Certainly, Mr. Bonn, how would you like it? “Let us work with you on making that occasion very special,” etc. What menu items, etc., etc.? He would call them back. He asked Lesa.

“Why don't you get Eddie and Dad involved in that?”

So that is indeed what he did. Fredrik, Eddie, and he actually drove into Seattle and went up the needle to make the arrangements early in the week. Cynthia tagged along with them and with her help and a couple of phone calls back to the house they had it all arranged. Then Ray and Eddie spent several hours showing the Sorensens the sights of Seattle. Eddie was much more knowledgeable about those sights than Ray.

The one, more intimate, occasion for Ray and Lesa had been the shopping for rings. The facts of wealth were a great help in keeping this occasion from becoming tedious. Many carats were involved in Lesa's rings – the engagement ring in particular, that she made a point of having to replace the World Series ring she wore in the search. The sales personnel at the Jewelers insisted on examining the World Series ring that was to be replaced. He and Lesa had become accustomed to the celebrity hubbub and were no longer so annoyed by it, not even by the occasional paparazzi.

Then the dress had to be chosen and although, as some sort of tradition that could not be broken, Ray just could *not* be involved in choosing or even seeing it, but he and everyone else in the house had to hear about the process afterward.

Cynthia and Allie were the principals involved in the decision itself. Sharon had gone with them because she would be getting a dress too. She told Ray that she had laid back, being as much of an extra to that process as Ray would have been. When the others picked out a dress and Lesa tried it on, then she would be asked to appraise it from her seated position. Sharon complained that they had had to go to several stores with miles between each in order to find the perfect dress, make sure it was tailored to perfection, and would be done in time for Saturday. Then it was time to find the proper one for Sharon, which she would have done much quicker without all the other women having their say. A similar dress was purchased for Stephanie with the data that Allie had readily made available. (When Stephanie was told about the “lovely” dress, she had been no little bit put out at her mother for having been excluded from the selection process.) Then Cynthia had to purchase a new dress for such a momentous occasion. In short, Sharon was exhausted.

This account was a major part of the only discussion that Ray had with Sharon while she was there. In addition to her dress-buying experience they discussed Lesa’s behavior during their last occasion together. The events surrounding Lesa having found her family, Lesa’s insistence on the possibility of ‘Bigamy Bridge’ being built between universes, how hurt Lesa had been when he and his family had showed up at SAFECO Field without their having told her, and how much Lesa had wanted his baby. Lesa, Lesa, Lesa. Ray guessed that was what best friends talk about. “You’re going to have to give her that baby now, you know that, don’t you, Mr. Bambino,” Sharon had joked in her way. And he had joked back that he didn’t actually hand out babies to just anyone who wanted one; he just provided the makin’s. Sharon laughed too loudly, he thought.

Eddie’s Lisa and Judy worried catering for a dinner after the wedding on Saturday, but all the women got involved in everything. Allie in particular had some contacts in the area that did that. It was an absolute madhouse.

The men were assigned to arranging seating and decorations for an outside ceremony. Fredrick had been assigned as principal in that. At a certain point in that process he had taken Ray aside. He and Cynthia had been thinking about what to get them for a wedding present.

“Would it be all right if we were to purchase a grand piano to be delivered by Saturday?” Fredrik asked. “I think we need that for the ceremony; there’s plenty of room for it later in your living room. What do you think, Ray?”

“Certainly, but my goodness. Does Lesa know?”

“No.” Would Ray let it be a surprise? They’d have it delivered right before the ceremony if they could, “So if we could just have a place ready for it out by where the ceremony will take place, Cynthia would like that.”

“Sure. Have you arranged where to find one?”

“Oh, yes. Cynthia has checked. She will go and pick out one whose sound she likes in particular.”

Thus, it went.

Little Eddie had grown very used to his grandfather when Ray had been in California, so the little guy spent a lot of time grasping Ray’s hand as Ray went about seeing to one chore after another while his mother was tied up with hers. Lisa teased him that he was pretty good at dealing with little kids.

“You and Lesa will soon have a house full of your own.”

“Not on your life, Lisa. I’m an old man.”

“Not anymore, you’re not,” Lisa teased. “Eddie’s right, she’s youngened you up.”

Lesla walked in to sit on the arm of Ray’s chair where he held Little Eddie on his lap. She ran her fingers through little Eddie’s hair affectionately much to his enjoyment apparently. He, like everyone else, was in love with Lesa.

“What are you two talking about?” she asked Lisa.

“I was just telling Ray that pretty soon you two would have a house full of your own little tots running around.”

Lesla looked down at Ray. “And how did he respond?” she asked.

“Oh, the usual Ray Bonn ‘I’m an old man’ response.”

“Well, he isn’t. He’s going to sire another line of super people.” She laughed at him, tousled his hair, and then was up and running elsewhere.

“She’s good for you, Ray,” Lisa judged.

“She is,” he said. “She’s good for the world.”

Almost as an afterthought Ray realized that he had friends in Major League baseball and that it would be a travesty not to at least invite his closest of those friends to the occasion. However, the team had left town for a two-week road trip on Monday; he contacted Mac one evening in Minneapolis, explaining that he and Lesa had wanted Mac and Hiro, at a minimum, to be at their wedding occasion. He in particular considered them close friends and was sorry they would not be in town when the ceremony took place.

“Please tell Hiro for me. It would be enjoyable to meet with you guys and your wives sometime in a context other than baseball if such an occasion ever presents itself.”

The conversation inevitably returned to, “We desperately need you again this year, Ray, but I won’t beg.”

“Thank you, Mac. It would get embarrassing for us both before very long. You had to be able to tell that we were lucky the other day. One lousy inch was all the margin we had. I think we’ve ridden this one out.”

He signed off, another obligation to a good friend fulfilled.

Meanwhile Edna had been working on the honeymoon... well, the book signing tour. The translation into French of the two books that Ray had authored including his joint authorship with Lesa on the Nobel Prize winning effort had been completed several months earlier. Sales had been even better in Europe than in the US. A book signing tour was somewhat in demand it

turned out. McGregor would like the tour to begin in London, proceed to Paris, and then on to Florence. It would be a heralded occasion with much publicity.

“You two are making me rich, Ray,” Edna said with her was-it-or-wasn’t-it-a-grin grin.

“Oh, God, Edna! Why’s it have to be such a production? It’s our honeymoon for Christ’s sake.”

“I can’t help it, Ray! You keep hitting home runs, winning World Series after World Series, winning the Nobel Prize, setting yourself up as the most eligible bachelor, marrying the most eligible young woman on the planet... on and on.”

“What?!”

“What part of that didn’t you get? You didn’t think anyone noticed any of that?”

“‘The most eligible bachelor and woman on the planet,’ is that what you said?”

Lesla had just come in on another interesting conversation. Cynthia was with her.

“What did you say, Ray?”

“Ask Edna, she said it.”

“Don’t you people read People Magazine?”

Cynthia laughed, “I don’t think they do, Edna. I saw that piece though.”

“Saw what?”

“You two are in the process of seriously depleting the world resource of marriageable people,” Cynthia summarized.

“Oh, God!” Ray got up and left.

“Edna, you have gotten him right back using the ‘Oh, God’ expletive again. How do you do it? Do you know how hard it was to get him over that?” Ray heard the women laughing as he continued down the hall. He assumed that Edna would receive the honeymoon alterations or confirmation she wanted from Lesla. He had probably just kicked himself out of another loop.

Later Lesla informed him that they were set up to leave midweek right after the wedding on a tour that would have them waving at crowds for several weeks.

But as a beehive produces honey, the Bonn house produced the plans for a “modest” wedding and honeymoon to end all modest weddings and honeymoons.

Friday evening came with the Bonns amassed at the base of the Space Needle. One elevator load after another was carried to the observation deck where they all reassembled before proceeding down the short flight of stairs to the revolving restaurant. The press was there in force much to Ray’s chagrin. Lesla didn’t seem to mind. It eventually provided a poster to replace the one of the grieving Nobel laureates, a cheery image that would hang for years on their bedroom wall.

The occasion was nothing short of fabulous. Lesa was aglow, and if Lesa is aglow, there can be nothing wrong with the world that matters too much right then, Ray thought. He felt good about everything being done up as she would like it to be, and that sufficed for it to be exactly as he would have had it too. While they enjoyed oysters and salmon, wine and champagne the restaurant spun around several times giving all the dinner guests grand views of volcanoes, Puget Sound, a lovely sunset, and finally the city in lights. There was a loud clink, clatter, chatting, and banter of happily dining guests.

When they finally got back home in bed and Lesa was nestled into Ray's arms purring words of happiness that were more like purring than words, that being the most expressive means of communicating their current internal state. "Ray, I am going to be so spoiled when this is over, it's going to be hard to settle down to what you once referred to as 'your serene life'. I do so want to make you happy, but I am desperately afraid that it may not be all that serene at times."

"That's fine," he said, "as long as I get to hear your most charming little snore every night. That will calm me down ready for another day and whatever it brings." Sometimes, like after he had said that, he wondered about himself and whether he was the same guy he had always been or not.

The big day came. "My God! You'd think this was a World Series or something," Jamie said as he stood there with Ray and Andrew.

Andrew laughed, "Yeah, and this wasn't even one of the big three."

"I'll bet you forgot to get you a tux, didn't you, Pop?"

"Oh, God!"

The piano arrived and was put into place. Cynthia played a few bars to make sure it had stayed in tune. Lesa heard the strains and came running, not quite dressed even.

"Oh, Cynthia I am so glad you did that. I love having piano music for this occasion and having a grand piano with you playing it is so much nicer – so much better sound."

"Do you like it?"

"It's a beautiful sound," Lesa said hitting a couple of chords.

"This is your father and my gift to you," Cynthia said.

Lesa hugged her and then ran over to hug Fredrik, both of them teary-eyed.

Allie came out, "Lesa you have to get back in here. We're not done."

So Lesa ran back in to have her finishing touches applied.

Jamie looked at Ray. "What're you going to wear?"

Another "Oh, God" exclamation.

"Come here," Jamie laughed taking Ray's arm. "I rented you a tux. I knew you'd forget."

Ray looked at Jamie, amazed. "You thought of that all on your own?"

"Of course not, I'm a Bonn," he smiled. "Judy told me to."

Finally, Andrew and Ray were ushered up to stand by the Justice of the Peace with Sharon and Stephanie beautifully in place also. Cameras began to flash, video footage began to roll at an unprecedented rate.

“Oh, God,” Ray thought. Who on earth will ever want to watch any of this once it’s over? No one.

Then Lesa came out on Fredrik’s arm. She was so beautiful; Ray could not have imagined anyone so beautiful. It was another of those few occasions in his life when tears welled up in his eyes.

The ceremony itself was succinct, their own brief vows written separately by each of them as Lesa had wanted. They were both simple and direct statements of good faith and meant nothing more nor less than traditional vows that pledged everything would be the two of them forever and ever. That sort of thing. Then it was – yes, just another – fabulous kiss, and it was over. They were, in actual fact, man and wife, legally and every other which way. Well, after they each signed the forms the Justice of the Peace had for them to sign. And it felt good.

The dinner was evidently good too. Probably it tasted better to the guests than to Ray and Lesa who were too preoccupied with each other to care much about the food. When that was over, they fed cake to each other in the traditional way, laughing in the process. Then Lesa threw a bouquet that bounced off Edna for Stephanie to grab. Then Lesa got into something a little more casual for sitting around in the evening talking with everyone.

Their wedding night was just another special night for them together. Well, certainly not hum drum.

The next day they began planning for their honeymoon. Lesa knew French, but no Italian. Ray knew virtually nothing in either language. What should they take? Would they need French and Italian dictionaries?

“I’ve arranged for an interpreter to accompany us everywhere and to be our guide,” Edna assured them. “We’ll be fine.”

Later Cynthia noted in talking to Ray, that she would have liked to be their interpreter.

“Is that possible? Are you feeling well enough for that kind of a trip? Could Fredrik come along too?”

Lesa got involved and discussed it with Edna as well.

Edna didn’t like it. It was too much like when Helen had started out on that book signing trip and she and Edna had gotten into it. This was a serious endeavor.

“Edna, I’m the wife here now; this is my honeymoon. You and I get along just fine. Cynthia won’t interfere with anyone.”

Well, okay, Edna guessed but it was not a cheerful acceptance, Lesa noticed.

She talked to Cynthia, but Cynthia said that she and Fredrik had just discussed it. Fredrik worried about her and the baby if she got too tired, being away from her doctor and in short they had both agreed it would be better to put off a trip like that until after the baby had come and was walking. Then hopefully she and Fredrik could travel with them to Europe. She would love to show them where she had grown up.

On this next day after their wedding their guests began to disperse. The cleanup was under way. By the time they were through with that, Lesa was a firm believer in taking Cynthia's approach to housework. She was exhausted. Allie had some names of good people who did housework. They would arrange that after they returned from their honeymoon.

Edna had flown out already and would meet them at Heathrow. She had work to do.

"Honeymoon?" Lesa had exclaimed, "Ray, it seems more like a work assignment to me."

"Yeah. We probably shouldn't have gotten Edna involved, should we?"

"Oh, it'll be fine once we are on the way. I always really get into this sort of thing once it has started"

"I remember, only too well!" Ray replied, only half teasing her. "Don't pull any fast ones on me this time, okay? I have *never* played soccer."

Well that day came too, and Edna was there to meet the already weary travelers as soon as they came wheeling out of customs. She was standing with all the other taxi drivers with their impersonal signs. And right beside her was Sharon.

"Sharon, I am so surprised," Lesa said, hugging her.

"She wanted to come," Edna excused.

Thus, Ray started right out being irritated with Edna. *Deja vu* all over again, he thought.

"Cynthia can't come, but Sharon can?" Ray complained to Lesa as soon as they were alone. "That makes no sense."

"Oh, Ray. It's okay. We're going to have a good time no matter what. It's our honeymoon, remember."

They did. Sharon actually acted to neutralize some of Edna's austerity and instill a little humor into their times together.

They did the book signing in a little bookstore just off Piccadilly Circus. Edna had booked them at the Thistle Piccadilly hotel. Actually, in the several days they were in London they did several bookstore signings with eager crowds in every case. They also had some time to browse the plunder in the British museum, over thirteen million artifacts stolen from every continent and culture in the world. They marveled at the Rosetta Stone and remembered back to Margot Mueller's grand praise of their work... and other less pleasant related memories. They wearied of the rooms full of mummies.

"Do you know what they did with bad girls in ancient Egypt, Lesa?" Ray asked as they looked from one to the next.

"I can only imagine," she said waiting for whatever the humor happened to be.

"They laid them in coffins and eventually they became mummies."

Then I would like to be "a bad girl in Egypt," she said.

They strolled on to witness the architectural ruins of ancient Greece that had been rebuilt as huge buildings right inside the museum.

“The Brits were awful,” Lesa exclaimed finally.

“Now you can’t go thinking all folks is lowbrows,” Ray teased, and they laughed. They were occasionally recognized – usually by touring Americans they noted – but they didn’t care. Their love was totally legitimate now, not that it had ever been anything else, but now they did not have to worry about what anyone else thought about it. It felt quite different now. They could stroll hand-in-hand, or with Ray’s arm around her waist. It was so different than when they had had to be so careful in expressing fondness for each other. When they had strolled through the Met so long ago their happiness had had to be veiled.

Then very soon they moved on to Paris where their interpreter joined them. She was very pleasant, but now there were five and being alone together as a honeymoon is supposed to be was more difficult. The book signings went very well. There were probably as many English translations as there were French ones that got sold.

They did the Louvre twice in the little bits of spare time they had. They went up to the second level of the Eiffel tower and looked down through the thick glass at the tiny people far below them.

“I prefer the Space Needle,” Lesa said.

They were getting tired by the time they got to Florence. Again, the bookstore signings with their interpreter becoming ever more important to this process. It seemed to go well enough. It seemed as though there were a considerable number of books being signed and purchased, but again they noted that no inconsiderable percentage of these purchases were being made by touring Americans.

They did the usual tours while in Florence. During one of these Lesa was pleased to note that Ray must have picked up his penchant for carrying his jacket over his shoulder from an uncircumcised Jewish King made famous by Michelangelo. Sharon made a point of there being certain features of the two gentlemen that were not all that similar.

The two physicists wanted to do a side trip to Padua because of the history of physics there. They were tired of book sales and signing. So Edna and their interpreter arranged a trip on which they departed right after an early breakfast at their hotel. But they went first they went through Pisa, which made no sense, observing the ostentatious bell tower and the famous Piazza del Campo, "Square of Miracles" to which Ray should never presume, Lesa assured him. Finally, they arrived at Padua late; everything was closed. Next day after staying over where everyone but Lesa and Ray wanted to see St. Anthony’s Basilica and nothing more. Ray and Lesa were too tired to remonstrate that their reason for Padua had nothing to do with basilicas. Everyone was tired. Everyone was cross. In short, the day was a disappointment.

“I just want to go home, Ray. To hell with Rome,” Lesa complained that evening as they went to bed without even having supper. They were totally distraught and exhausted.

“To hell with Rome, indeed,” Ray agreed. “The only problem Sweetie is that our flight leaves from Rome,” he teased.

That wasn't funny. Didn't he know how exhausted she was? That whole week of the wedding before they left was exhausting, and every day since was just piling on more and more oppressive weight onto that.

He did know. They would let Edna and Sharon tour alone tomorrow. Then the next day they would head to Rome and they could hole themselves up in the hotel there too if that's what Lesa wanted. He certainly had nothing more he wanted to see on this trip. He too wanted to be home.

Once home, they collapsed into each other's arms with only Allie and the two kids coming by occasionally for the first few days. But Lesa was too full of energy to be down long.

#20 Great Expectation

Now weeks after returning from Europe, Ray was holding Lesa as she slept. He guessed that sleeping she might be what one could consider serene, but at no other time. Even when she had been exhausted, she could not have been considered serene. Probably no one could be; that was a different concept.

However, her enthusiasm and excessive energy were never dissonant or noisy, or in the least bit scatter-brained. There was meaningfulness about her activities and a purpose to all she did that had a relaxing effect even though Ray was probably forced to be as busy as he had been at any time in his life, he thought. She managed him a lot like Helen had, but she kept him more involved. But as Ray had become inclined to tell anyone trying to get him involved in something or other, whether major league baseball, or political action committees, he and Lesa were physicists first and foremost.

So sure, before too long there had been some research being done which was Ray's escape from the other activities and chores that Lesa seemed always to have awaiting him. He could usually pull her away from most anything she was currently involved in by merely mentioning some intellectual challenge or other in the physics or mathematics that was perplexing him. That would be enough to initiate hours of that marvelous fantasy behind the blue church door eyes. But the burning fire of their work wasn't like it had used to be between them.

The work that Lesa had begun looking into with him when he had first reestablished contact with her in the late spring and early summer had several major problems to be solved before that activity would provide a viable alternative to the standard model of the Big Bang. It had proven as enticing and frustrating to Lesa as it had been to Ray over a long span of years. It had been an area of research that he would work on enthusiastically for several months until he finally accepted one of the challenges as an impasse, and then he would shelve his work on it and not bring it out again for a year or so. This had gone on for well over twenty years already by then.

The intractability of the 'Lyman-alpha forests', which is the label given to the absorption lines from protogalaxies of neutral hydrogen gas distributed throughout the intergalactic medium, was what Ray had first mentioned to

Lesa. She had immediately hopped into the draft of his book that he had tentatively titled, *Cosmological Effects of Scattering in the Intergalactic Medium*. She followed his writing with that same enjoyment she had had with all of the materials he had given her previously. It was as if these too were all her own ideas that she was trying to ferret out. She had soon identified the holes that he had told her about and adopted them as her own problems.

Lying here now with Lesa on his arm, he longed for her as a more constant companion, taking a more integral part in their research. Before all his other digressions he had first been awakened thinking about neutrons. He guessed it was the fact that he was thinking about this on his own and had not yet broached the subject of what he was trying to work out with Lesa. He might do that in the morning. He had been withholding information, he guessed, but she was too damned fast. Sometimes she dismissed his ideas without first convincing him that they were not viable.

She was sleeping soundly now though, as she so often was when ideas would come to him in the night. It was still just as it had been with Helen, he would pursue his lonely thoughts on the nature of reality until implications got too entwined to maintain in a sleepy brain without having written them down. That was, after all, how he had gotten started writing in the first place, to keep his place in the long list of complex thoughts so that he wouldn't have to work his way up that same slippery slope again and again on other sleepless nights.

How much energy is involved in the decay of a neutron into a proton and an electron? Let's see, a neutron is 939.6 Mev, a proton 938.3, and an electron is about 0.5. That makes an energy difference of about 0.8 Mev divided by the speed of light squared. That's a wavelength of about ten-to-the-minus-tenth centimeters, a Big Bang type number. So, if all the matter in the universe had resulted from neutrons being spewed forth from the infrequent but spectacular eruption of black holes as perhaps signaled by the gamma Ray bursts for which specific sources could not be identified, and that are randomly distributed across the sky, then...

Black holes can't erupt, but the most gargantuan of all assumed black holes, the universe itself can? He had to represent both sides in every argument.

Bull shit!

Lesa stirred.

"What is it, Ray? Are you awake?"

"Yeah, sorry. Did I wake you?"

"Didn't you say something?"

"I don't think so," Ray replied, wondering to what extent his expletive had rocked his body, next to which she had lain so comfortably.

"You did," she insisted. "I heard something."

"Snoring maybe?" He squeezed her to him feeling and loving everything about this wonderful woman. "You feel great, Lesa."

"You too," she replied sleepily, "just like that night I slept in your private sanctuary at the Sheltry. Remember?"

"I'll never forget. I'm not sick tonight," he toyed.

"What time is it anyway?" she asked, obviously becoming wide-awake.

"Let's see, 4:30, I guess. We've got a few more hours."

He felt her palm flatten on his stomach and slide down toward where he lived, where he *really* lived, not where he reasoned, but way back there behind the store front. She lifted her head and kissed his lips. Rolling toward her, he reached under her gown and found once more those distant hills of fantasy.

So that was pretty much the way Ray and Lesa's life together had begun. With a bang! Off in directions he would not have expected. What were the odds? He might ask Tim, he thought as he lay there now, holding Lesa again on another night. How many nights in a row could one man get lucky? Not very damn likely tonight, Ray thought. As close to zero as he could imagine right now.

Lesa had made him watch a recording of his ridiculous argument with Tim McCarthy during that interview after his final game, laughing at him all the while, and coaching him as if she were Edna Robinson on what not to do next time. There wouldn't be a next time, Ray had insisted. But he had forced her to let him see the portion of the show in the eighth and ninth innings in which the illustrious Doctor Lesa Sorensen had attempted to reveal the inner workings of her client, soon to be husband, Ray Bonn – again, shamelessly before a national audience. He teased her about every pompous phrase. Like how much credit can you get for one predictable "déjà vu"?

"You're going to pay for this, Ray Bonn," she had said. "You're going on Hot Box Sports for the World Series, Mister. We'll see how *you* like it."

"Are you kidding? The Mariners aren't even going to make it this year."

"Whether they do or not, you're going on the show as color commentator just to see how well you like it. You and Tim can argue about the statistics of whether there is even a universe out there for all I care if that's what the two of you want to do." She had laughed at him.

"Not on your life," he had said.

"I'm still your agent, and I'm getting you on there, Ray, if I have to do it with duct tape again."

"Oh, no, no, no, Sis'r Hot Box," Ray had teased, but she had been seriously angry, he could tell. He worried that there might actually be hell to pay when the World Series rolled around.

But here he was alone again, having missed the World Series altogether. With Lesa on his arm now he remembered why he had not had to worry about whether there really would be hell to pay. Whether he woke her up with an audible "bull shit" or not, there was not likely to be any deeper intimacy than this tonight with Lesa feeling as crummy as she'd been feeling.

Ray had been working alone on his latest concerns about how the universe works, thinking about it by himself at night. There were only brief interludes now during which they discussed physics between conversations concerning

the new arrival, Lesa bending over toilets throwing up, and other domestic and political issues that had overtaken their lives.

Evidently she would be feeling better very shortly according to Doctor Sharon, since this phase of pregnancy does not last for the entire ordeal, in fact, supposedly not very much longer. The next phase would be easier, even if an increasing general discomfort of the stretching of a single beautiful cocoon to house both an uncomfortable mommy and a greedy baby, with the plumbing and wiring ineptly designed so as to not quite accommodate that functionality in the human species.

Ray felt guilty for having done this awful thing to Lesa. He had told her that and she had attacked him vociferously between retchings, explaining just how happy she was to have his scourge upon her. So he didn't console her that way anymore, if he consoled her at all, for this gross inconvenience, but he was sorry all the same. He didn't know whether it was a lack of a feminine side, just a general lack of sensitivity, or just plain selfishness, but that he felt no urge to procreate yet again at his age was a basic fact.

The prospect of coexisting with another teenager, this time throughout what were supposed to be his 'golden' sixties and on into seventies did not appeal to him in the slightest. Her exclaiming how wonderful it would be did not convince him. Allie was expecting again now too. The whole world seemed to be into procreating as some sort of a show of power. We must be going to have another war to end all wars, he thought cynically. Maybe the overpopulation problem should be given the top priority on their liberal crusade, Ray thought.

Allie was due – in the parlance of women – at the same time as Lesa. The two women had spent an inordinate amount of time together during those early months of their marriage. Ray could not help wonder whether the pheromone synchronization thing that had so excited Helen about their mothers and nuns in convents had been kicking in. Well anyway, their child would definitely have playmates, kissing cousins or aunts or nephews or some other ungodly incestuous relationship depending on who had what. And billions upon billions of peripheral unborn relatives.

Lesla squirmed next to him. He could feel her little belly right up next to his waist. He liked the way she still slept right up next to him as the lovers they were. Her enlarging breasts were against his chest now too. She had not lost her allure for him. He looked down at her in the dull light of early morning. Friedrich Nietzsche had been right; a breast certainly could have whatever purpose one chose to assign to it.

"You okay, Ray? I like being here next to you. Is it too uncomfortable?"

"I love having you there. I'm sorry you're uncomfortable, and I'm glad it's you who wants this so badly."

"You have to want it too, Ray," she said excitedly, almost angrily, wide awake now. "That's important. You're going to help me through this. Get yourself into the mood for playing a lot of baseball with him."

"Him?"

"I think so, Ray. That's how I envision it. We'll know for sure pretty soon." She kissed him as he squeezed her gently. "I miss our love making, Ray, and I know you do too," she said as she touched him to feel his interest.

"I miss it too. It's been so wonderful."

"It will be again, Ray. Meanwhile we have a lot going on this weekend with our soiree tomorrow afternoon. Then I'll arrange with Sharon to see if it'll work out for her to be my doctor. I really don't want Tom. I like him fine, but... well, you know.

Ray knew. He didn't really like it either, not that that mattered.

"We might have to have her live with us a while at the end. Is that all right with you?"

"Sure. However works best." He wasn't sure.

Then they left that as Lesa proceeded thinking more exclusively of her soiree as she called it.

"I'm looking forward to getting to know Julie a little better, after having heard so much about her and then talking with her at the funeral. She knows a lot of important people." Then after a moment, "I think she's nice."

Ray chuckled. "You know, whenever Helen and I would talk about Julie, we always came around to her being a 'good person'. 'Nice', I guess that would be. But we usually started out using the term Venus of Willendorf to describe her."

Lesa laughed. "You're going to be calling me that pretty soon, I'll bet, with the way things are developing. Anyway it will be good for you to get to talk with someone from your past."

"It will?" Ray's thoughts diverted to Friedrich Nietzsche again.

"It will. You enjoy it too, okay? I know you two had something going down, back then. So what. Talk about that too. You need to address some of your issues from back then."

"Issues?"

"Yeah, issues."

They talked on a little longer, but not about his "issues".

The next day Julie arrived early.

Helen had not had her cousin Julie come up to visit her and Ray in the last couple of decades. In fact Julie had never been to visit them in all the years that they had been married. Why that should have been the case became more and more mystifying and disconcerting for Ray the more he learned about how closely Helen and Julie had worked together throughout their lives. That Helen had not trusted Julie and him to be in the same house together since that episode up at Raven's Creek, buried now by tens of feet of water and decades of time, was a fact of which they were now both poignantly aware. Julie and he were in the same house, and right now they were alone together in the same room.

Lesa had come to believe that skeletons do not belong in closets. Julie could hardly be considered a skeleton by traditional standards for such entities.

She was a full-bodied woman, who had narrowly escaped the fate of the Venus of Willendorf by her surviving vivacity and the still curvaceous distribution of her bulk. In some sense she was definitely a skeleton in Ray's closet nonetheless. Although Lesa had not suggested that Julie was here for the purpose of purging her soul mate's soul or any such inanity other than her skills in working for environmental causes, that that had had a certain amount to do with Lesa's motives seemed obvious nonetheless. Ray was quite sure of it.

It amazed Ray at just how much we retain of the morphological form of our bodies even as they shed their cells to become totally different physical entities several times in an interval of decades. Ray could tell that Julie had not changed in many very essential ways, despite having put on a little weight. She was still the same voluptuous woman, and she was still fearlessly in love with life and its possibilities.

They had hugged when Ray first greeted her at the front door. There were tears in her eyes, obviously brought about by thinking of the one through whom they were related and by whom they had been kept apart. They cheered up immediately when Lesa came bubbling along. As the long weekend progressed Ray realized that the Helen he should have known so much better, he hadn't. Why, for example, would she have worried about the two of them ever disrupting his and Helen's happy home?

He had always thought of Helen as being as free of jealousy as a person could get, and Lesa as a more ruthless protector of her own interests – remembering back to her seeming concern about Professor Margot Mueller. But he saw that it was not that way at all. He knew that Helen had informed Lesa of their experience up Raven's Ravine, and yet Lesa had done her damndest to get the two of them into rooms alone so they could talk it out, he presumed. It was a good idea. Of course the irreversibility of time was all on Lesa's side.

"I've been ashamed of myself all these years, Ray," was how Julie began after they had quite awkwardly found themselves alone together in the living room that morning as Ray entered looking for a book he had mislaid.

"You needn't have been," he said. "We were kids."

"I was older."

"And sooo beautiful," Ray teased finding himself more comfortable in her presence with such a comment than he ever would have thought he would have been.

"You were a hunk, too." She seemed to lighten up then.

"Yeah. And those were meaningful times, weren't they?"

"Yes. Those times gave meaning to my life, I guess."

"You brought meaning into ours."

"Yours too?" she asked somewhat diffidently. "You always seemed somewhat aloof. You never seemed to get involved."

"That's just Ray Bonn. He's a funny guy."

"It wasn't very much fun for you back then though was it? I don't think we handled that whole thing very well, did we?"

"You mean Helen knocking you over on your rump?" He laughed, but too consciously preferring an awkward situation and avoiding the deeper issue to which Julie referred. "No. I don't suppose we did. We were kids; we didn't know how."

"Do we know how now, do you suppose?" Julie had a frankness about her large dark brown eyes when they locked onto yours as she spoke that could be quite alarming. It was very disconcerting to Ray, and he wondered how many men had been caught not looking at the eyes, knowing that they should have been and that Julie would be watching to see how they did. Her stare demanded a forthrightness for which Ray was seldom willing. "We'll see, I guess," he finally answered.

"You loved your father, didn't you?" she asked as unabashedly as she had tossed the guitar to its twanging agony and had so immediately proceeded to unfasten his belt all those many years ago.

Lesla came in at that point, looking from one to the other. They were just then facing each other silently so that Lesla had not known that anyone was even in the room. "Did I spoil something?"

"No, not at all. It was I who spoiled it by asking Ray a most impertinent question about the Creek," Julie responded courageously.

Lesla looked at Ray. "And you didn't answer?"

"No," he said, "But the answer was going to be yes."

"Now that tells me a lot," Lesla said chuckling as she continued whatever search she was on, out into the hall and on toward the kitchen.

"I'm sorry again, Ray," Julie said as she sat back down after Lesla had gone.

"Well, don't be, again... or ever. It's really nice to have you here and to be able to talk with someone who knows about those old times."

"Yes. I miss that too. There isn't anybody now. Jonesy is such a cluck," she laughed. "Helen and I didn't really talk about it much, and I shouldn't have brought it up now."

"Oh, I think you should have. Why else do you think Lesla orchestrated this. Everything can't be about the environment, can it? I'm guessing some of it must be about us. Anyway, I suppose otherwise we'd just dance around these things our whole lives, huh?"

"Yes. Do you think we could go for a walk or something, Ray?"

"Sure. You got an apple?"

"No, Ray." Julie's big eyes became long angry slits. "No apple today."

"Good. Then I won't need my guitar."

"No. You won't need that either."

"You're getting to be an old lady, Julie, and thwarting a lot of my youthful dreams about doing it right next time."

They both laughed.

"We have a nice pond and a waterfall out back with some comfortable lawn chairs around it appropriate for old folks like us to dream of a long-forgotten paradise."

"Good," she said getting up to follow him out through the kitchen where Lesa was puttering around getting ready for the dinner after the group discussion later in the day. "I saw it from an upstairs window. Do you have any forget me nots?"

"A few... and I remember a lot more. Would you like some to wear."

"Where are you two escaping to?" Lesa asked as they passed through the kitchen to the back door.

"We need to talk about flowers out by the waterfall where we can be free from the constraints of civilization," Ray said. "We'll come back to help you when freedom ain't worth nuthin' anymore."

"We've got some laundry that's been dirty a long time," Julie said, laughing. "Can't you tell? I do want to help you with that though, Lesa. This is an important thing you're setting up. I really appreciate all you're doing."

"Well, I have no doubt that what you guys are talking about is of the utmost importance as well," she replied with a secretive smile. "I'm guessing I may not see you two for a while."

After they were in the yard with the back door slid shut again, they headed down toward the terrace that surrounded the larger pond. Julie said as they walked, "You do know that Lesa knows all about that incident up by the waterfall. You know that, don't you? Did you tell her?"

"Yeah, Lesa knows. I guess Helen told her. I didn't. But I'm used to women knowing everything about me. Anything you want to know?"

Then as the waterfall came into view, Julie seemed impressed, "You guys did a pretty good job of re-creating your 'secret place', I'd say."

"Do you think this is a good spot for a commune?"

"Quit it, Ray." He could tell he had upset her with his repeatedly teasing about that incident. "I need to forget that aspect of my past."

"I'm sorry, Julie. I really am. The whole thing seems so silly now though, doesn't it? But for a long time it wasn't, not for me at least. This landscaping here – neither Helen nor I ever mentioned how similar the layout was to our Raven's Creek sanctuary. That's a bit strange, isn't it?"

"It is strange, Ray. Weren't you conscious of how you laid it out?"

"Well, I'm the one who did lay it out, and I just thought it looked good. Helen seemed to have too. She suggested a couple of features – the water fall being over there instead of here for example," Ray pointed to the difference. "I guess that's what we thought up at the creek too. It just felt right for a place to sit down with nature and forget about the adult's rat race."

"It's nice, Ray," Julie allowed, "but communes are a thing of the distant past, aren't they?" She smiled with only a slight chuckle, more just a clearing of her throat. "I know it was a long time ago and it does seem absurdly silly now, but I think it made a big difference in our lives, don't you? You with 'I'm-not-Julie' and me with nobody. I probably wasn't very good for you and Helen... not that first summer anyway." She hesitated. "Your dad knew it, didn't he?"

"I dunno. He never formulated much except with sarcastic one-liners, equations, and his slide rule. But he flat out didn't like you and your 'pimply-ass' friends much, that was for sure, huh? I don't know that he ever worried about me much."

"His disdain is certain." She laughed as she remembered. "Phil and Jack were freaked out by him, so they took off. You were kind of stuck between a rock and a hard place there, weren't you? Helen on one side, your dad on the other, and me totally infatuated with you, Ray, despite loving my cousin Helen. Did you know that? How infatuated I was?"

He paused thoughtfully, "It seems like I always have been between some hard rock and something else even harder. I guess that maybe everybody is. But, no. I had no idea that I was not alone in the world lusting for someone I couldn't have. I had it pretty bad for you, although I think we had turned each other into mere objects. I couldn't get those beautiful images of you swaying under that waterfall out of my mind. They're still there, Julie." He laughed incongruously, "along with Helen saying, 'Isn't she beautiful, Ray?'"

"The only image I have of you is you sitting there singing. You know, it came back so poignantly when you were singing with Lesa after that last game of yours. I do remember another hard objective thing too though."

"Yeah, me too. The rocks and hard things that everyone must survive."

"It's not as big a rock and as hard a place as it was for you up the Creek there though. Sometimes I think it might have been easier on us all if Helen had relaxed and let us – well, me – go ahead, don't you? I went up there for that purpose and I didn't plan on letting you go very soon. I couldn't get you out of my head after that."

"Not all these years later I don't think it would have been better. Fidelity isn't all that natural of a human condition I've found. Helen's squeal was all that kept me on the straight and narrow a couple of times since then, so I'd have to say that that worked out all right for me – in the long run, anyway – and for Helen, and now for Lesa, I suppose. Helen certainly was the expert on what Ray Bonn needed. You have to give her that."

"I give her that... and a lot more. She was an amazing little girl and an even more amazing woman. I loved her, you know. She helped me turn my life around, but she didn't trust me around you, did she?"

"I didn't think about that until recently when I found out how much you and Helen had done together during all these years. Other than that one incident I never thought of her as a jealous person, but I guess she was."

Ray sat down thoughtfully watching the water rolling off the ledge of a replica waterfall and down into the pond where a lone white lily blossom floated among undulating green pads with a few other knobby buds of promise.

Just then they heard voices, Lesa's and Sharon's. Sharon must have just arrived. Lesa pointed the direction for Sharon to get down by the trout pond where Julie and Ray were sitting.

Ray rose to meet her half way, pecking her cheek and having his pecked in exchange.

"You look great, Sharon. It's good to have you. I suppose Lesa's already pumped you for medical advice."

"Yeah. She's fine."

Ray introduced Julie to Sharon, both of them averring to have heard good things about the other.

"Well, the Bambino strikes again, huh?" Sharon teased. "Another grand salami. You think we'll need the DNA kit for this one?"

"I think Lesa deserves all the credit or blame, whatever it is."

"I dunno, you don't seem to shoot blanks cowboy. How about bottling some of that snake oil up so I can join the hit parade of pregnant ladies."

Ray didn't know exactly how to react to her sense of humor with its total lack of decorum in front of someone she had just met.

"I'm serious about the bottle, Ray." She laughed her raucous laugh again, "And the snake too." Then she turned to Julie and said quite politely, "It's nice to have met you, Julie. I'm sure we'll get to know each other better this weekend. I'm going to go see if Lesa needs any help."

Ray sat back down with a quizzical smile on his face.

"Jeez, Ray, was that some kind of demonstration of just how awful I must have been up there at the ravine?"

"That's just Sharon. You know last fall when Helen and I finally got around to discussing our times up the ravine with you, we teased about your boobs, of course. Sorry, but we did. You and Dolly Parton wouldn't have been Dollies without them. But any conversation with you in it always came around to what a nice person we thought you were and what a positive force you had been in our lives. I think Sharon may be Lesa's Cousin Julie."

"You think those things are boobs, Ray? I'll show you boobs," she laughed her generous hearty laugh. "So will Lesa ultimately come around to being jealous of Sharon and those boobs, you think?"

Ray laughed. "No, not Lesa. Anyway, I've been trained, remember. I'm also getting to be an old man, but more importantly, Sharon is lesbian I think. There's a reason for the bottle."

"Really. Usually I can tell right off. You sure – about Sharon, I mean."

"No, I'm not sure of anything, but she spends most of her time with Edna Robinson and I've never seen either of them eye a guy."

"She's eyeing you."

"Yeah, through a bottle."

Julie laughed to terminate that digression.

"Helen was kind of envious of your body though, wasn't she?" Ray said. "I imagine that seeing the way I drooled at you back then made her jealous."

"Yes, I think she was a little jealous, and I tried to make my exploits look grand to her. If she only knew how much I wished I had looked, and *were* exactly like her. I don't think I ever told her."

"Your exploits did seem pretty spectacular, from the outside looking in at least."

"But Helen was an amazing woman, wasn't she?" Julie chose to change directions again. "You know, when I heard you chew that reporter out for the religious crap about Helen being up there looking down on you, I knew you had survived the way she would have wanted you to."

"And you? How have you made out?"

"Oh, I'm a survivor too, you know."

They sat there peacefully for a minute or so longer.

"It's sure pretty out here, Ray, and the sound of that waterfall is so soothing. But I think I should probably get back in to help Lesa and learn to appreciate Cousin Sharon a little, don't you?"

"Yeah, me too, I suppose," Ray said, laughing with her.

"Lesa's an amazing woman too, Ray. I suppose she'll be getting us together along so we will have other opportunities to talk."

"Yeah, I don't think she worries about us much. Anyway, we have a bunch more of the weekend. Maybe we'll find another chance for a conversation. Maybe we can take turns strumming that guitar in there later. I'd like to hear some of those old folk songs again."

"Yeah, I'd like that. I'm sure glad for how things have turned out for you, Ray, after all the hard times. You're one tough hunk of man."

"And you? Are you in a good situation now?" They were standing and beginning to walk back toward the house.

"Well, I've had so many men, ...been married to a few." She smiled knowing he knew all that. "They weren't the answer. None of them. So I'm not looking for that kind of answer any more. I like the kind of stuff that you and Lesa are getting into now. It's a meaningful way to spend one's days. Well, at least as one gets older." She smiled a smile that says, "My life is fine right now, but I sure liked the way we were."

They were at the kitchen then where Lesa sent Ray off to another room on a task and Julie began helping Lesa with something or other. The three women chatted away happily. Ray could hear them from where he was doing some dusting. Sharon and Julie weren't having any problems with each other.

The soiree seemed to be a reasonable beginning to a determination of what causes would be most worthy of Ray and Lesa's time, effort, and money, and that of others who seemed eager to get involved. It turned out to be a much more pleasant experience than Ray would have thought. He realized that he could have made his and Helen's lives more rewarding by having taken more of an interest in what had mattered so much to her. He felt good about at least living up to her dying request in this regard.

Most of the people who had been at the house the night of his retirement from baseball were here again. The exceptions included Eddie who was worrying his orals; Jamie and Judy whose twins had come and were now down sick with something or other; Edna who was pushing some new book; and Cynthia and Fredrik whose eight pounds of boyhood had been born in the interval. In fact, Lesa and Ray had just returned from a pleasant several week

stay in Boston earlier in the week. Lesa had been thrilled to help Cynthia with all those babyhood chores that nearly nauseated Ray.

But, in addition to Andrew and Charmaine (whose attendance at such a gathering somewhat surprised Ray because of Andrew's definite libertarian leanings), there were several new people. Judy had indeed found someone who knew how to get foundations off and running. Sandi Williams was an expert at getting balls rolling and keeping conversations lively. Her experience included a stint with the Gate's charitable foundations. Eddie's Lisa had come back without Eddies (Big or Little) but with friends John and Louise Smart and her own little heart-stopper for wannabe mommies, Lisa Marie whose life in the outside world had begun some months before.

The Smarts had worked for liberal causes most of their lives. Cousin Julie was familiar with them from having worked together with them on one cause or another down in the Bay Area, first with John's parents and later as an intimate of Louise's father.

Charmaine had contacted several of Helen's other associates who had helped on similar endeavors on other occasions, and some of those women were present. Ray was surprised to find out that Charmaine was actively involved in such liberal causes, Andrew's counter opinions notwithstanding. He found it humorous to watch Andrew's expressions as he seemed to be finding out for the first time what his own wife really thought about issues and where some of his money had been going. He and Ray made eye contact a few times and both of them had started laughing to the chagrin of both Lesa and Charmaine and others less able to show it.

That Andrew seemed to be getting it, even at this stage of his life, had surprised Ray. Ray had never tried to communicate his feelings on such political issues with Andrew. He wouldn't have thought it would have met with much success if he had, and ruined what they did have going. Now Ray could tell that Andrew was appreciating Charmaine's role in this production.

Primarily the occasion was the establishment of a network with whom decisions for where to place effort could be discussed in the future. But it was a start, and several projects were proposed.

Ray hadn't really been intending to raise hell by proposing reforestation of the Sahara, which Andrew enthusiastically supported, but apparently it was the general opinion of his proposition that he had done just that.

Lesa said, "Okay, Ray. You and Andrew do the ground work to determine whether there is anything at all to justify even discussing such a huge endeavor."

"You think it's impossible, don't you? Is that it? Why?" Ray asked, not just argumentatively, but out of a sincere interest in what she might think on this issue. Apparently she sincerely thought he had just been rabble rousing.

"Probably not to you, Ray, but to the rest of us," she said curtly.

Ray could tell that Andrew was tickled by even the prospect of such a domestic squabble in paradise, but Ray wasn't. That wasn't what he had been after at all.

Lisa's degree had been in 'Environmental Science', they found out, whatever that was, Ray didn't actually know. He should look it up some time to get a better feel. However, for one reason or another she showed some interest in whether, in fact, such a gigantic restorative effort might be viable. She mentioned a "Greenbelt" project that was already on-going in Africa.

"The Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathai initiated a similar effort in which thousands of women planted 30 million trees throughout Kenya as part of her Green Belt Movement," Lisa said.

John had a degree in biology with some marginal applicability to what would be required. "It would be a lot tougher with the Sahara, of course." However, he said that if Ray wanted him to, he would join their effort to look into the feasibility of plant growth in the soils of the lower Sahara where the loss of arable land had been the most devastating. He'd find out what sort of trees would have the best chance of survival and just how much water it would take as the plants grew.

So Lesa had to lighten up a bit, and agreed that sure, they should at least entertain the possibility. "I know the water desalination and distribution problems are hugely important issues, if that's what you're thinking, Ray. Surely you must have thought some about that and have some ideas, to spring it on us like this." She was probably just testing him.

Sheepishly Ray announced that he wasn't sure he had. "I haven't run any calculations or experiments to get numbers if that's what you mean. But I've wondered whether the effect that forests have on weather, would return if the forests were restored. In short, how much of the devastation is irreversible."

Anyway some minor aspect of their communal activity would be spent looking into it. Since he had indeed been interested in what might be involved in reversing weather patterns that seemed to change with deforestation, it could be fun. Andrew was a good engineer and he would put out a real effort, Ray thought. And the desalination and distribution problems were huge.

But the primary thrust of the get together was to identify other already established projects where money and effort could do the most good.

The light supper on Friday night that Lesa had arranged for after their discussions was very different than what Helen would have laid out, but that everyone enjoyed the occasion and was enthused to change the world was evident. Ray watched all their excitement somewhat cynically from the head of the table where Lesa had placed him.

Somehow, he could never avoid being Ray Bonn just looking on.

But Ray Bonn had Lesa on his arm again now, snoring softly. The growing bulge of her belly leaned heavily against him with what she supposed to be a boy inside. He felt no cynicism at all about that. But what he thought about now was something else.

Among Helen Bonn's last whispered syllables had been those used to express her clouded awareness that Ray had not revealed the full extent of his life-long aspirations to Lesa to whom he was now wed. Eddie's Lisa had

exposed that right off, so that was out of the way. But that was the tip of an iceberg by the name of Ray Bonn.

As in the case that had been extracted from him that first night, what he had told Lesa had been true – all of it. Ray never lied. But like the horse trainer who, when interviewed to discuss his younger brother's current success in having developed a champion racehorse had said, "I taught him all he knows... but not all *I* know," Ray tended to withhold that kind of pertinent information.

Often he omitted what might better have been said, and revealed what might better *not* have been said at all. His not telling the truth had not been an issue that Helen or anyone else would ever have had to worry about in his regard. She had always known as surely as she knew anything about her husband – and she had surely known everything there was to know, having grown up with him – that Ray Bonn was incapable of formulating a lie.

It was rather his reticence to freely relate peripheral additional information about himself that had often frustrated her. Maybe it was just because he had worked on projects for the DoD where one must limit the distribution of information to those with an explicit need to know, with the errors always having to be made on the side of silence and secrecy. Ray had an aversion to the spoken word anyway, except for those occasions when he got on a blab blab blab roll, as he referred to such occasions, for which he always had the deepest despair afterwards.

His reticence to 'open up' had sometimes been a source of major contention between he and Helen. They seldom had what could be called arguments really, because that was not Ray's way, just Ray's reticence.

Now he found himself face to face with this same old problem, but with a new wife, another wife who loved him, and whom he loved dearly, albeit differently than he had loved Helen, and than Helen had loved him. But he could tell that although Lesa did not mention it, she too often became irritated by his strange withdrawals into himself. The fact that she did not have the time, or apparently the continuing interest to work on physics with him, left him with his same old private internal wonderings. He must address this aspect of his character, he supposed, since he knew that whether Lesa worked right beside him or not, she would at least be interested in, and provide help with such issues. Better to learn how to share his thoughts verbally even at this end of his life than not at all, since it did seem that something should be done about it.

Lesa had stepped into the role of Mrs. Ray Bonn, albeit without changing her name for a second time, as complacently as she had accepted his ideas of the inner workings of cosmology and relativity, and so much else of a much more personal nature. Ray knew that that had not been an abject solicitude on her part, but rather a mere settling into a ready-made environment so totally compatible with her own familiar modes of thought. That she and Ray seemed to resonate at some deep cognitive level was something that neither of them had ever considered worth doubting. So, it seemed to him, she had accepted a

domestic role very much along the lines defined by precedence. That those lines had been defined by someone else did not seem to bother her at all. It wouldn't. That that someone had been her friend, Helen Bonn, merely added in so many ways to the ease with which she and Ray had begun their lives together as having more or less already bonded under the auspices of Helen's gradually lifting shadow. But there are always problems. That was to a large extent what their Nobel Prize had been about. Even at the lowest levels of reality, there are always irreversible problems.

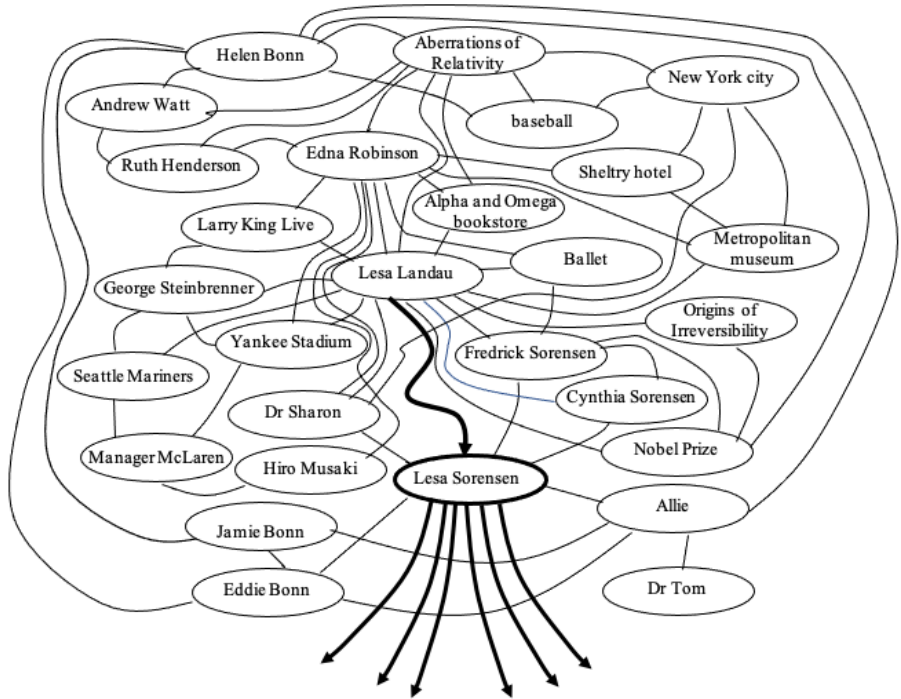
Right now Ray listened to the gentle purr of Lesa's snoring, a pleasing resonance he remembered from that eventful occasion years back now – that first night they had met, holding onto each other on the couch in the main room of their suite there in the Sheltry. Lesa had just finished baring her soul to him because capriciously she had felt that they were, in some obscure sense, soul mates. She had disclosed everything. Well, all of which she was aware. She had not been able to recall certain of the gorier details of her mother's murder. She told him later that a few more pertinent details had gradually broken free of the tangles in which that event had become enmeshed in her mind. It was still obscure. But everything of which she had any conscious grasp would willingly have been given up to anyone, especially to Ray. She had absolutely no tendency to be reclusive.

And yet... the promised explanation of that for which Helen had told Lesa she needed forgiveness from both Lesa *and* Ray had not been forthcoming. Their lives were so busy right now. There was never time.

As he lay there holding her and thinking of that first encounter, he recalled having at some time or other learned that abused children would become friends with strangers very quickly. Was that it? Had he just been 'anyone' who had happened along? No. He had not. He knew that he had been very special to her from the first. He was, in fact, the one person who happened to have had a leg up on the problem she had been working at the time, whose mind worked the way *hers* worked. He had approached that, and every other problem, the same way she would have, methodically, successfully. Now they were together, but not without problems still to be worked out, but importantly, together.

Ray had been working alone on his latest concerns about how the universe works, thinking about it by himself again. There were only brief interludes now during which they discussed cosmology or any physics at all between conversations concerning the new arrival, Lesa bending over toilets throwing up, when she wasn't delving into other domestic and political issues that had overtaken their lives. This was not the enticing hills beyond the blue church doors of Ray's fantasy about the girl who explained his ideas better than he could have himself in the Alpha and Omega bookstore over two years ago now. The soulmate relationship that even Douglas Hofstadter had identified as the mode of communication of individuals with a partial isomorphism of brain function supporting their mutual style of thinking. Their life together should have reinforced their similarities of thought, but instead their brains

Ray had thought much about this problem since their marriage – even tried making a partial mapping of his own brain as it would have been when they were so sure of their soulmate reality back in their days at the Sheltry. Was this an irreversible problem – lovers growing apart? He didn't know. Perhaps it was. Maybe it was just entropy.



Ray Bonn's partial brain mapping from back when he and Lesa had first considered themselves soul mates

The fact of Lesa's pregnancy was having a significant impact on their personal lives, their sex lives, and their working relationship. None of those aspects of their joint being was so important that she (and therefore they) did not put every aspect of that new child's life at the top of any list of what had to be done, and what would have to be put off indefinitely. Now that still unborn fetus came first.

As Ray lay here now, Lesa on his arm snoring, he thought about Cynthia and Fredrik postponing an occasion of traveling with Ray and Lesa for just these reasons. He was certain that that trip would have worked out fine, Edna or no Edna, Sharon or no Sharon, and gone much more smoothly with them along. Cynthia would have gotten across the subtleties that mattered most to Ray and Lesa both with regard to what they had to say about their discovery and questions of the audience that needed to be answered. Now they would not be able to take that enjoyable trip for the next umpteen years. He didn't think either Cynthia or Lesa – or Fredrik for that matter – realized how having

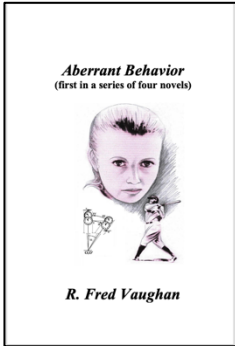
a child would tie a family down. Ray knew how it could change the course of one's life. Oh, well. They could anticipate a pleasant trip in their future even longer this way.

Compared to Lesa having a son – that had now been confirmed as, in fact, going to be a son – not much else mattered to Lesa, or to Ray for that matter.

Irreversible Processes

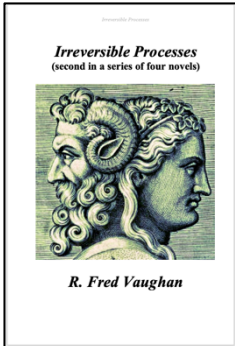
Irreversible Processes

The four novels in this series



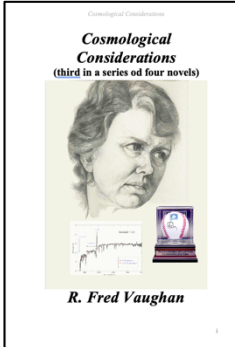
Aberrant Behavior

This book describes a two-week period in New York City that shapes the destiny of three generations of the Bonn family. A book signing tour ends here; Ray meets Lesa, collaboration on a new book describing the origin of entropy is born, Ray is forced into going up to bat in Yankee Stadium as a gimmick, Lesa's biological father is found, and then Ray returns to a life down what he had always considered to be a serene little street in a hemlock forest in the northwest where he was born and raised.



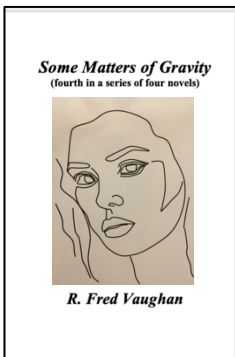
Irreversible Processes

This book describes a stressful two-year period following Ray's return to his life with Helen and his family. The collaboration continues but in fits and starts, as a new fan favorite with the World Series on the line baseball will not go away for Ray, the collaboration meets with the ultimate success of a Nobel prize, but Helen becomes terminally ill succumbing to the disease in the end. After many difficult months Ray and Lesa marry and settle down at the home where Ray and Helen had lived.



Cosmological Considerations

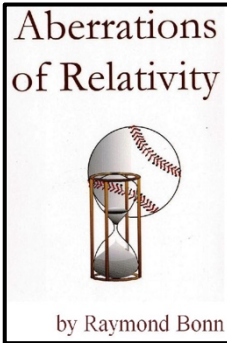
Despite their deep enduring love for each other, paradise is not without its problems. Lesa's domestication in a home like she had never had consumed all her energies as a mother and a supporter of liberal causes. The science that had forged their relationship was supplanted by the pleasures of family and raising an extraordinary son. Roger was so like his father. But in the layers beneath all that happiness Ray was frustrated by not having been included in family secrets and Lesa's lack of scientific enthusiasm that Ray had loved so much about Lesa.



Some Matters of Gravity

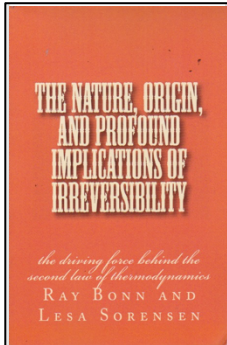
Ray and Lesa Bonn's ultimate demise and the beginnings of Roger Bonn's family is remembered by their dearest of friends Julie Davidson. Roger has retired early from major league baseball, which their son Tommy has just begun. But having never let go of his love of the physical sciences; Roger involves two extraordinary women in pursuing his intuition with regard to a new look into the nature of gravity, merging it with electric charge to explain the nature of the subatomic particles. Romance and tragedy alter Roger's life much as it had Ray's.

Nonfiction books referenced to this series



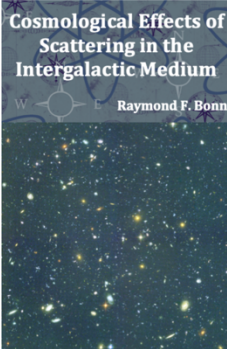
Aberrations of Relativity

This book is a composition of skeptical articles with regard to the dogma that has come to be included in Einstein's Special Theory of relativity. It provides an illustrated description of the theory to be understood by any reasonably intelligent individual. It suggests that aberration of light transmission is the central fact of coordinating relatively moving observers. Observations dispute the central premises of the possibility of aligning orthogonal frames of reference and that the same timed even is seen by in relative motion.



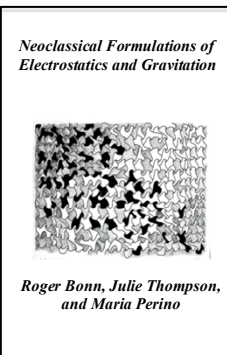
The Nature, Origin and Profound Implications of Irreversibility

This book demonstrates that the ultimate source of entropy is in the submicroscopic interactions mediated by photons of electromagnetic radiation. Every mediated interaction results in the reduction of energy difference between interactants. It is shown how this results in the stationary state of a closed thermodynamic system. A thorough treatment of the major thermodynamic discoveries is provided as well as analyses of other conjectures of possible origins of entropy.



Cosmological Effects of Scattering In the Intergalactic Medium

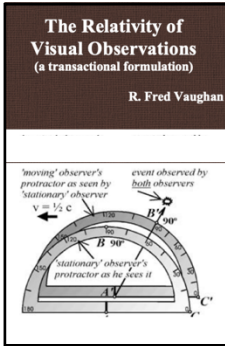
This book develops a more viable alternative to the standard cosmological model at explaining the multifarious effects of observations of the distant universe. It is forward scattering in a relativistic plasma that produces cosmological redshift, not recessional Doppler. The amount of redshift per unit distance is determined by the hydrostatic pressure of the medium through which light passes; this magnifies the effect through galaxy clusters and surrounding large spiral galaxies, thus accounting for what has been attributed to dark matter.



Neoclassical Formulation of Electrostatics and Gravitation

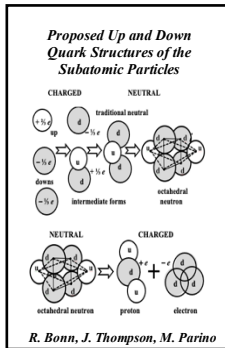
This book addresses similarities of electrostatics and gravity to identify the causal relationship between the two. Solution of the Poisson equation appropriate to both disciplines shows that 'point' particles and action-at-a-distance are relics of an inconsistent formulation. Charge (both electrostatic and gravitational) are constrained to a small region of space, not a point. Gravitational charge is derived from the electrostatic energy of a particle which plays out at the quark level. Together, these charges provide all the forces of nature.

Other books pertinent to these topics



The Relativity of Visual Observations

This book introduces a modification of Einstein's relativity theories to include the spacetime metric in the special as well as general theory. This accommodates misalignment of the coordinate frames of two relatively moving observers. The misalignment of coordinate frames affects the transmission of light between frames. The transverse field vectors (one from each frame on an interaction) results in a spiral transmission path producing Lorentz contraction and time dilation of the individual electromagnetic interaction, not the whole of the space time of the observers.



Proposed Up and Down Quark Structure of Subatomic particles

This book elaborates the combined effects of electrostatic and gravitational charge of up and down quarks to effect the observed synthesis of subatomic particles without the need of gluons and a separate 'strong force' to enforce confinement. There is a continuous trend of lower energies in successive generations of particles. This involves a bipartite neutron structure through which the reduction in total energy proceeds and an electron that is comprised of three down quarks.