Fever By Robin Cook
Also by Robin Cook
VECTOR TOXIN INVASION
CHROMOSOME 6
CONTAGION ACCEPTABLE RISK FATAL CURE TERMINAL BLINDSIGHT VITAL SIGNS HARMFUL INTENT MUTATION
MORTAL FEAR OUTBREAK MINDBEND GODPLAYER BRAIN SPHINX
COMA
THE YEAR OF THE INTERN

To the joy of my family— it began with my parents, now shared with my wife.
PROLOGUE  The poisonous molecules of benzene arrived in the bone
marrow in a crescendo. The foreign chemical surged with the blood and was carried between the narrow spicules of supporting bone into the farthest reaches of the delicate tissue. It was like a frenzied horde of barbarians descending into Rome. And the result was equally as disastrous. The complicated nature of the marrow, designed to make most of the cellular content of the blood, succumbed to the invaders.
Every cell exposed to the benzene was assaulted. The  nature of the chemical was such that it knifed through the cell membranes like steel through butter. Red cells or white, young or mature, it made no difference. Within some lucky cells where only a few molecules of benzene entered, enzymes were able to inactivate the chemical. In most others the destruction of the interior membranes was immediate.

Within minutes the concentration of the benzene had soared to the point that thousands of the poisonous molecules had reached the very heart of the marrow, the primitive, finely structured stem cells. These were the actively dividing units, serving as the source of the circulating blood cells, and their activity bore witness to hundreds of millions of years of evolution. Here, being played out moment by moment, was the incredible mystery of life, an organization more fantastic than the wildest scientific dream. The benzene molecules indiscriminately penetrated these busily reproducing cells, interrupting the orderly replication of

the DNA molecules. Most of these cells either halted the life processes in a sudden agonal heave or, having been released from the mysterious central control, tumbled off in frenzied undirected activity like rabid animals until death

intervened.

After the benzene molecules had been washed away by repeated surges of clean blood, the marrow could have

recovered except for one stem cell. This cell had been busy for years turning out an impressive progeny of white blood cells whose function, ironically enough, was to help the body fight against foreign invaders. When the benzene penetrated this cell's nucleus, it damaged a very specific part of the DNA but did not kill the cell. It would have been better if the cell had died because the benzene destroyed the fine balance between reproduction and maturation. The cell

instantly divided and the resulting daughter cells had the same defect. No longer did they listen to the mysterious central control and mature into normal white blood cells. Instead they responded to an unfettered urge to reproduce their altered selves. Although they appeared to be relatively normal within the marrow, they were different from other

young white blood cells. The usual surface stickiness was absent, and they absorbed nutrients at an alarmingly selfish rate. They had become parasites within their own house.

After only twenty divisions there were over one million of these lawless cells. By twenty-seven divisions there were over one billion; they then began to break free from the mass. First a trickle of sick cells entered the circulation, then a steady stream, finally a flood. These cells charged out into the body eager to establish fertile colonies. By forty divisions they numbered over a trillion.

It was the beginning of an aggressive, acute myeloblastic leukemia in the body of a pubescent girl, starting December

28, two days after her twelfth birthday. Her name was Michelle Martel and she had no idea except for a

single symptom: she had a fever!

## **ONE**

A cold January morning tentatively fingered its way over the frigid landscape of Shaftesbury, New Hampshire. Reluctantly the shadows began to pale as the winter sky

slowly lightened, revealing a featureless gray cloud cover. It was going to snow and despite the cold, there was a damp sting to the air; a sharp reminder that off to the east lay the Atlantic.

The red brick buildings of old Shaftesbury huddled along

the Pawtomack River like a ghost town. The river had been the support, the lifeblood of the town; it sprang from the

snow-laden White Mountains in the north and ran to the sea in the southeast. As the river coursed past the town, its smooth flow was interrupted by a crumbling dam and a large

waterwheel that no longer turned. Lining the riverbanks were block after block of empty factories, reminders of a more prosperous age when New England mills were the center of the textile industry. At the extreme southern end of town, at the foot of Main Street, the last brick mill building was

occupied by a chemical operation called Recycle, Ltd., a rubber, plastic, and vinyl recycling plant. A wisp of acrid, gray smoke rose from a large phallic smokestack and merged with the clouds. Over the whole area hung a foul, choking odor of burnt rubber and plastic. Surrounding the building were enormous piles of discarded rubber tires, like the droppings of a gigantic monster.

South of the town the river ran through rolling, wooded hills, interspersed by snow-covered meadows and bordered by fieldstone fences erected by settlers three hundred years before. Six miles south of the town the river took a lazy

curve to the east and formed an idyllic six-acre peninsula of land. In the center was a shallow pond connected to the river by an inlet. Behind the pond rose a hill capped by a

white-framed Victorian farmhouse with gabled roofs and gingerbread trim. A long winding driveway bordered with oaks and sugar maples led down to the Interstate 301 heading south toward Massachusetts. Twenty-five yards north of the house

was a weather-beaten barn nestled in a copse of evergreens. Built on piles at the edge of the pond was a

miniature copy of the main house; it was a shed turned playhouse.

It was a beautiful New England landscape, like a January calendar scene, except for a slight macabre detail: there were no fish in the pond and no encircling vegetation within six feet.

Inside the picturesque white house, the pale morning light diffused through lace curtains. By degrees the gathering dawn gently nudged Charles Martel from the depths of a satisfying sleep. He rolled over onto his left side, enjoying a contentment he'd been afraid to acknowledge for the past two years. There was a sense of order and security in his life now; Charles had never expected to experience this again

after his first wife had been diagnosed with lymphoma. She had died nine years ago, leaving Charles with three children to raise. Life had become something to endure.

But that was now in the past, and the awful wound had

slowly healed. And then to Charles's surprise, even the void had been filled. Two years ago he had remarried, but he still was afraid to admit how much his life had changed for the better. It was safer and easier to concentrate on his work

and the day-to-day necessities of family life than to acknowledge his newly regained contentment and thereby admit to the ultimate vulnerability, happiness. But Cathryn, his

new wife, made this denial difficult because she was a joyous and giving person. Charles had fallen in love with her the

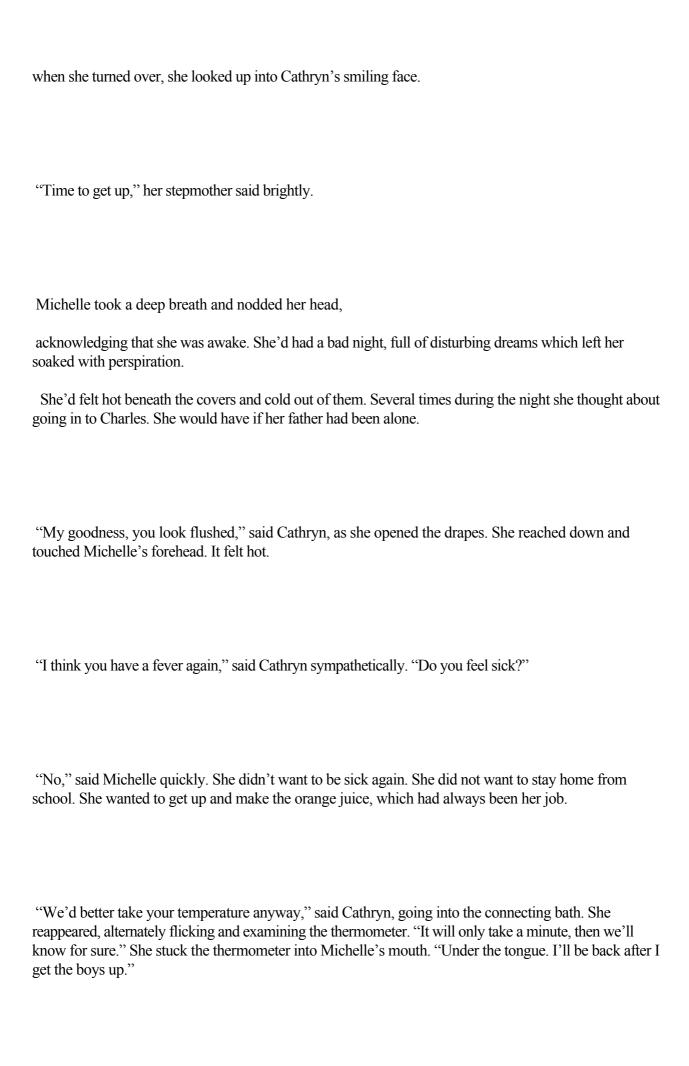
day he met her and had married her five months later. The last two years had only increased his affection for her.

As the darkness receded, Charles could see the placid profile of his sleeping wife. She was on her back with her right arm casually draped on the pillow above her head. She looked much younger than her thirty-two years, a fact that initially had emphasized the thirteen years' difference in their ages. Charles was forty-five and he acknowledged that

he looked it. But Cathryn looked like twenty-five. Resting on his elbow, Charles stared at her delicate features. He traced the frame of her provocative widow's peak, down the length of the soft brown hair to

her shoulder. Her face, lit by the early morning light, seemed radiant to Charles and his eyes followed the slightly curved line of her nose, noticing the flare of her nostrils as she breathed. Watching her he felt a reflex stirring deep within him.
He looked over at the clock; another twenty minutes before the alarm. Thankfully he lowered himself back into the warm nest made by the down coverlet and spooned against his wife, marveling at his sense of well-being. He even looked forward to his days at the institute. Work was progressing at an
ever-increasing pace. He felt a twinge of excitement. What if he, Charles Martel, the boy from Teaneck, New Jersey, made
the first real step in unraveling the mystery of cancer? Charles knew that it was becoming increasingly possible, and the irony was that he was not a formally trained research scientist. He'd been an internist specializing in allergy when Elizabeth, his first wife, had become ill. After she died he gave up his lucrative practice to become a full-time researcher at the Weinburger Research Institute. It had been a reaction against her death, and although some of his
colleagues had told him that a career change was an unhealthy way to work out such a problem, he had flourished in the new environment.
Cathryn, sensing her husband was awake, turned over and
found herself in an enveloping hug. Wiping the sleep from her
eyes, she looked at Charles and laughed. He looked so uncharacteristically impish.
"What's going on in that little mind of yours?" she asked, smiling.
"I've just been watching you."
"Wonderful! I'm sure I look my best," said Cathryn.

"You look devastating," teased Charles, pushing her thick hair back from her forehead.
Cathryn, now more awake, realized the urgency of his arousal. Running her hand down her husband's body, she encountered an erect penis. "And what is this?" she asked.
"I accept no responsibility," said Charles. "That part of my anatomy has a mind of its own."
"Our Polish Pope says a man should not lust after his wife."
"I haven't been. I've been thinking about work," Charles teased.
As the first snowflakes settled on the gabled roofs, they came together with a depth of passion and tenderness that never failed to overwhelm Charles. Then the alarm went off. The day began.
Michelle could hear Cathryn calling from far away, interrupting her dream; she and her father were crossing a field. Michelle tried to ignore the call but it came again. She felt a hand on her shoulder, and



The door closed and Michelle pulled the thermometer from

her mouth. Even in that short a time, the mercury had risen to ninety-nine. She had a fever and she knew it. Her legs ached and there was a tenderness in the pit of her stomach. She put the thermometer back into her mouth. From where she lay she could look out the window and see her playhouse that Charles had made out of an ice shed. The roof was covered with new-fallen snow and she shivered at the cold scene. She longed for spring and those lazy days that she spent in that fantasy house. Just she and her father.

When the door opened, Jean Paul, age fifteen, was already awake, propped up in bed with his physics book. Behind his head the small clock radio played a soft rock and roll. He was wearing dark red flannel pajamas with blue piping, a Christmas gift from Cathryn.

"You've got twenty minutes," Cathryn said cheerfully.

"Thanks, Mom," said Jean Paul with a smile.

Cathryn paused, looking down at the boy, and her heart melted. She felt like rushing in and swooping him into her

arms. But she resisted the temptation. She'd learned that all the Martels were somewhat chary about direct physical

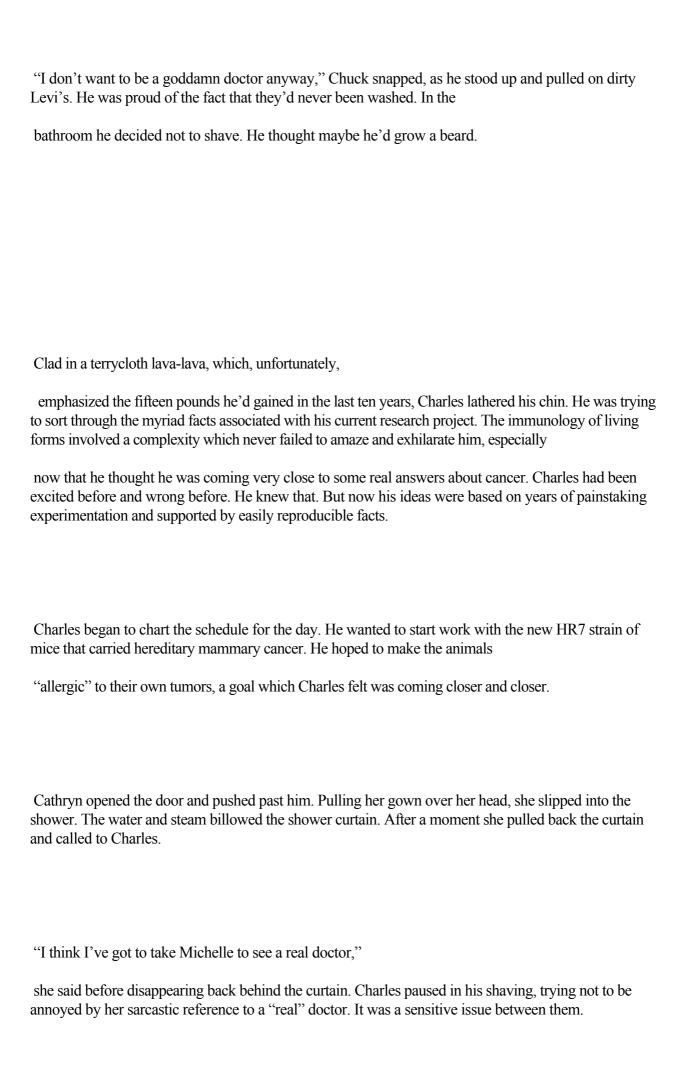
contact, a fact that initially had been a little hard for her to deal with. Cathryn came from Boston's Italian North End where touching and hugging was a constant. Although her

father had been Latvian, he'd left when Cathryn was twelve, and Cathryn had grown up without his influence. She felt 100 percent Italian. "See you at breakfast," she said.

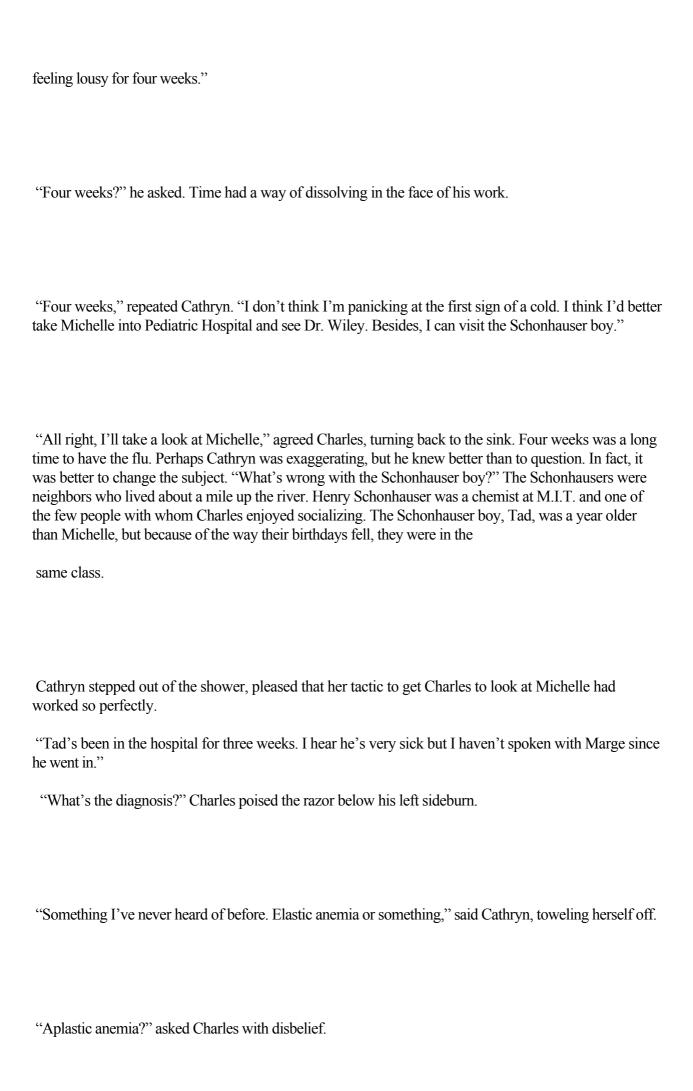
Jean Paul knew that Cathryn loved to hear him call her Mom and gladly obliged. It was such a low price to pay for the warmth and attention that she showered on him. Jean Paul had been conditioned by a very busy father and seen himself eclipsed by his older brother, Chuck, and his irresistible baby sister, Michelle. Then came Cathryn, and the excitement of the marriage, followed by Cathryn's legal adoption of Chuck, Jean Paul, and Michelle. Jean Paul would have called her "grandmother" if she wanted. He thought he loved Cathryn as much as his real mother; at least what he could remember of her. He'd been six when she died.
Chuck's eyes blinked open at the first touch of Cathryn's hand but he pretended sleep, keeping his head under his
pillow. He knew that if he waited she'd touch him again, only a little more forcibly. And he was right, only this time he felt two hands shake his shoulder before the pillow was lifted. Chuck was eighteen years old and in the middle of his first year at Northeastern University. He wasn't doing that well and he dreaded his upcoming semester finals. It was
going to be a disaster. At least for everything but psychology.
"Fifteen minutes," said Cathryn. She tousled his long hair. "Your father wants to get to the lab early."
"Shit," said Chuck under his breath.
"Charles, Jr.!" said Cathryn, pretending to be shocked.
"I'm not getting up." Chuck grabbed the pillow from
Cathryn's hands and buried himself.

"Oh, yes you are," said Cathryn, as she yanked the covers back.
Chuck's body, clad only in his undershorts, was exposed to the morning chill. He leaped up, pulling the blankets around him. "I told you never to do that," he snapped.
"And I told you to leave your locker-room language in the locker room," said Cathryn, ignoring the nastiness in Chuck's voice. "Fifteen minutes!"
Cathryn spun on her heel and walked out. Chuck's face flushed in frustration. He watched her go down the hall to Michelle's room. She was wearing an antique silk nightgown that she'd bought at a flea market. It was a deep peach color, not too different from her skin. With very little difficulty, Chuck could imagine Cathryn naked. She wasn't old enough to be his mother.
He reached out, hooked his hand around the edge of his door, and slammed it. Just because his father liked to get to his lab before eight, Chuck had to get up at the crack of
dawn like some goddamn farmer. The big deal scientist! Chuck rubbed his face and noticed the open book at his beside.
Crime and Punishment. He'd spent most of the previous evening reading it. It wasn't for any of his courses, which was probably why he was enjoying it. He should have studied chemistry because he was in danger of flunking. God, what would Charles say if he did! There had already been a huge blowup when Chuck had not been able to get into Charles's

alma mater, Harvard. Now if he flunked chemistry . . . Chemistry had been Charles's major.

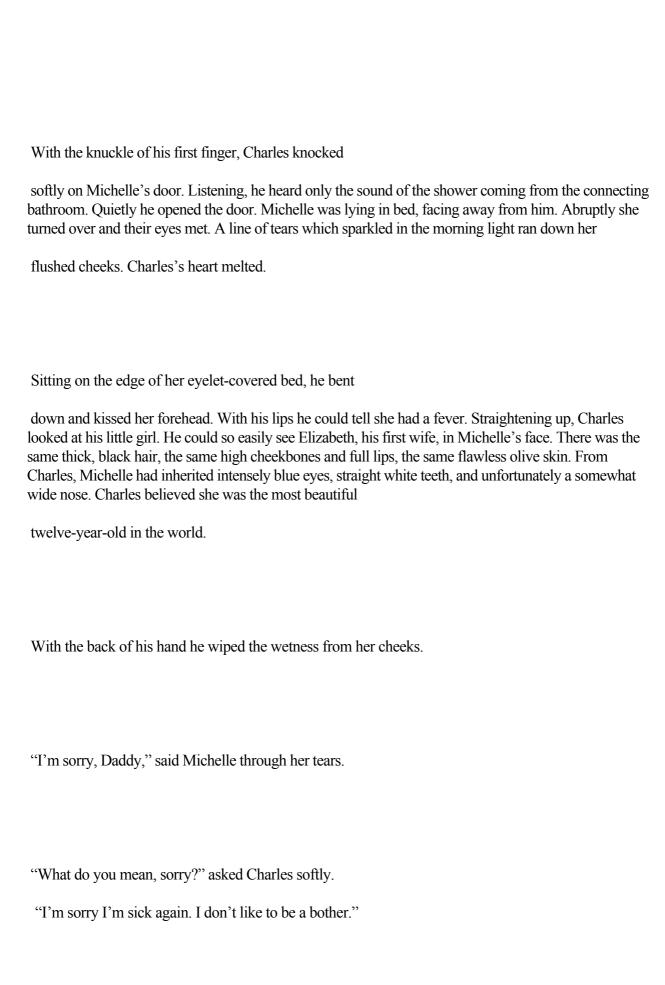


"I really thought that marrying a doctor would at least guarantee good medical attention for my family?"
"I really thought that marrying a doctor would at least guarantee good medical attention for my family," shouted Cathryn over the din of the shower. "Was I wrong!"
Charles busied himself, examining his half-shaved face, noticing in the process that his eyelids were a little puffy. He was trying to avoid a fight. The fact that the family's
"medical problems" spontaneously solved themselves within twenty-four hours was lost on Cathryn. Her newly awakened mother instincts demanded specialists for every sniffle, ache, or bout of diarrhea.
"Michelle still feeling lousy?" asked Charles. It was better to talk about specifics.
"I shouldn't have to tell you. The child's been feeling sick for some time."
With exasperation, Charles reached out and pulled back the edge of the shower curtain. "Cathryn, I'm a cancer researcher, not a pediatrician."
"Oh, excuse me," said Cathryn, lifting her face to the water. "I thought you were a doctor."
"I'm not going to let you bait me into an argument," said Charles testily. "The flu has been going around. Michelle has a touch of it. People feel lousy for a week and then it's over."
Pulling her head from beneath the shower, Cathryn looked directly at Charles. "The point is, she's been









Charles hugged her. She felt fragile in his arms. "You're
not a bother. I don't want to even hear you say such a thing. Let me look at you."
Embarrassed by her tears, Michelle kept her face averted
as Charles pulled away to examine her. He cradled her chin in the palm of his hand and lifted her face to his. "Tell me how you feel. What is bothering you?"
"I just feel a little weak, that's all. I can go to school. Really I can."
"Sore throat?"
"A little. Not much. Cathryn said I couldn't go to school."
"Anything also? Handagha?"
"Anything else? Headache?"
"A little but it's better."

"Ears?"
"Fine."
"Stomach?"
"Maybe a little sore."
Charles depressed Michelle's lower lids. The conjunctiva was pale. In fact, her whole face was pale. "Let me see your tongue." Charles realized how long it had been since he'd done clinical medicine. Michelle stuck out her tongue and watched her father's eyes for the slightest sign of concern. Charles felt under the angle of her jaw and she pulled her tongue back in. "Tender?" asked Charles as his fingers felt some small lymph nodes.
"No," said Michelle.
Charles had her sit on the edge of the bed, facing away from him, and he began to draw up her nightgown. Jean Paul's head came into the room from the connecting bathroom to tell her the shower was free.

"Get out of here," yelled Michelle. "Dad, tell Jean Paul to get out."
"Out!" said Charles. Jean Paul disappeared. He could be heard laughing with Chuck.
Charles percussed Michelle's back somewhat clumsily but
well enough to be convinced that her lungs were clear. Then he had her lie back on her bed, and he drew her nightgown up to just below her nascent breasts. Her thin abdomen rose and fell rhythmically. She was thin enough for him to see the recoil of her heart after each beat. With his right hand, Charles began to palpate her abdomen. "Try to relax. If I hurt you, just say so."
Michelle attempted to remain still but she squirmed beneath Charles's cold hand. Then it hurt.
"Where?" asked Charles. Michelle pointed and Charles felt very carefully, determining that Michelle's abdomen was tender at the midline. Putting his fingers just beneath the
right ribs he asked her to breathe in. When she did, he could feel the blunt edge of her liver pass under his fingers. She said that hurt a little. Then with his left hand under her
for support, he felt for her spleen. To his surprise he had no trouble palpating it. He'd always had trouble with that maneuver when he was in practice and he wondered if Michelle's spleen wasn't enlarged.
Standing up, he looked at Michelle. She seemed thin, but she'd always been slender. Charles started to run his hand
down her legs to feel the muscle tone, then stopped, noticing a series of bruises. "Where'd you get all these
black-and-blue marks?"



"He's a pediatrician and he sees patients up to eighteen, smarty pants."
"I want you to take me."
"I can't, dear. I've got to go to the lab. Why don't you get dressed and come down for some breakfast?"
"I'm not hungry."
"Michelle, don't be difficult."
"I'm not being difficult. I'm just not hungry."
"Then come down for some juice." Charles lightly pinched Michelle's cheek.
Michelle watched her father leave her room. Her tears  welled up anew. She felt horrid and did not want to go to the hospital but worst of all, she felt lonely. She wanted her father to love her more than anything in the world and she knew that Charles was impatient when any of the kids got



Chuck looked up from his cereal box to mouth some

obscenities at his younger brother. Jean Paul ignored him and opened his physics book. It occurred to him that his father never noticed what he wore. It was always Chuck.

"Really, Chuck," Charles was saying. "Do you honestly feel you have to look that bad?" Chuck ignored the question. Charles watched the boy eat with growing exasperation.

"Chuck, I'm speaking to you."

Cathryn reached over and put her hand on Charles's arm.

"Let's not get into this discussion at breakfast. You know how college kids are. Leave him be."

"I think I at least deserve an answer," persisted Charles. Taking in a deep breath and blowing it out noisily through his nose to punctuate his annoyance, Chuck looked into his

father's face. "I'm not a doctor," he said. "I don't have to adhere to a dress code."

The eyes of the father and the older son met. Chuck said to himself: "Take that, you smart-ass son-of-a-bitch, just

because you got good grades in chemistry you think you know everything, but you don't." Charles examined the face of this son of his, marveling how much arrogance the boy could manufacture with so little basis. He was intelligent enough but hopelessly lazy. His performance in high school had been such that Harvard had rejected him, and Charles had a feeling that he wasn't doing well at Northeastern. Charles wondered where he, as a father, might have gone wrong. But such musing was made difficult by the personality of Jean Paul. Charles glanced at his other son: neat, easygoing, studious. It was hard to believe that both boys had sprung from the same genetic pool and grown up together. Charles's attention returned to Chuck. The boy's defiance had not altered, but Charles felt his interest in the issue wane. He had more important things to think about.

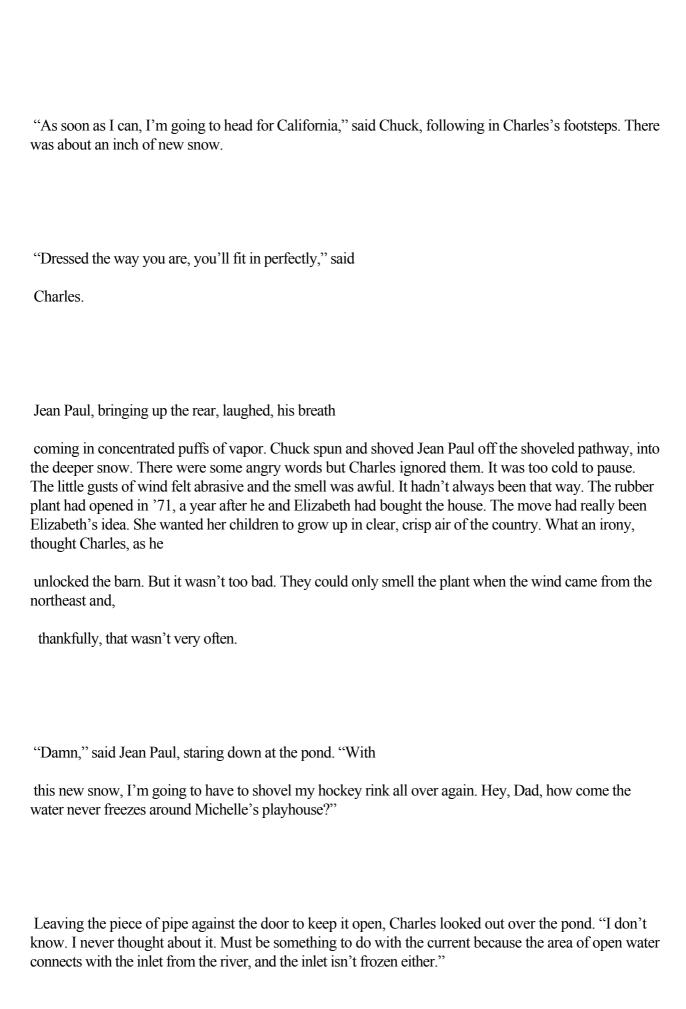
"I hope," said Charles evenly, "your appearance and your grades have nothing in common. I trust you are doing all right at college. We haven't heard much about that."
"I'm doing all right," said Chuck, finally dropping his eyes back to his cereal. Standing up to his father was
something new for Chuck. Before he'd gone to college, he had avoided any confrontation. Now he looked forward to it. Chuck was sure that Cathryn noticed and approved. After all,
Charles was a tyrant with Cathryn as well.
"If I'm going to drive the station wagon into Boston, I'm going to need some extra cash," said Cathryn, hoping to change the subject. "And speaking of money, the oil people called and said they won't deliver until the account is settled."
"Remind me tonight," said Charles quickly. He didn't want to discuss money.
"Also my semester tuition has never been paid," said
Chuck.
Cathryn looked up from her food and glanced at Charles, hoping he would refute Chuck's allegation. Semester tuition amounted to a lot of money.
"I got a note yesterday," said Chuck, "saying that the tuition was way overdue and that I wouldn't get credits for my courses if it weren't paid."











	"Ugh," said Chuck, pointing beyond the playhouse. There on the apron of frozen mud surrounding the pond was a dead mallard. "Another dead duck. I guess they can't stand the smell, either."
	"That's strange," said Charles. "We haven't seen ducks for several years. When we first moved here I used to hunt them from Michelle's playhouse. Then they disappeared."
	"There's another one," cried Jean Paul. "But he's not dead. It's flopping around."
	"Looks drunk," said Chuck.
	"Come on, let's go help it."
	"We haven't much time," cautioned Charles.
]	"Oh, come on." Jean Paul took off over the crusted snow. Neither Charles nor Chuck shared Jean Paul's enthusiasm, but they followed just the same. When they reached him, he was bending over the poor creature who was in the throes of a seizure.





The five-year-old red, rusted Pinto complained as Charles turned the key. Because of a series of holes in the muffler the Pinto sounded like an AMX tank when it finally started. Charles backed out of the garage, slid down the drive, and turned north on Interstate 301, heading toward Shaftesbury. As the old car picked up speed, Charles felt relief. Family life could never be made to run smoothly. At least in the lab the variables had a comforting predictability and problems lent themselves to the scientific method. Charles was growing less and less appreciative of human capriciousness.

"All right!" he shouted. "No music!" He switched off the radio. The two boys had been fighting over which station to hear. "A little quiet contemplation is a good way to begin the day."

The brothers looked at each other and rolled their eyes. Their route took them along the Pawtomack River and they got glimpses of the water as it snaked its way through the countryside. The closer they got to Shaftesbury, the more

intense the stench became from Recycle, Ltd. The first view of the town was the factory's smokestack spewing its black plume into the air. A harsh whistle shattered the silence as they came abreast of the plant, signaling a changing of shift.

Once past the chemical plant the odor disappeared as if by magic. The abandoned mills loomed on their left as they proceeded up Main Street. Not a person was in sight. It was like a ghost town at six forty-five in the morning. Three rusting steel bridges spanned the river, additional relics of the progressive era before the great war. There was even a covered bridge but no one used that. It was totally unsafe

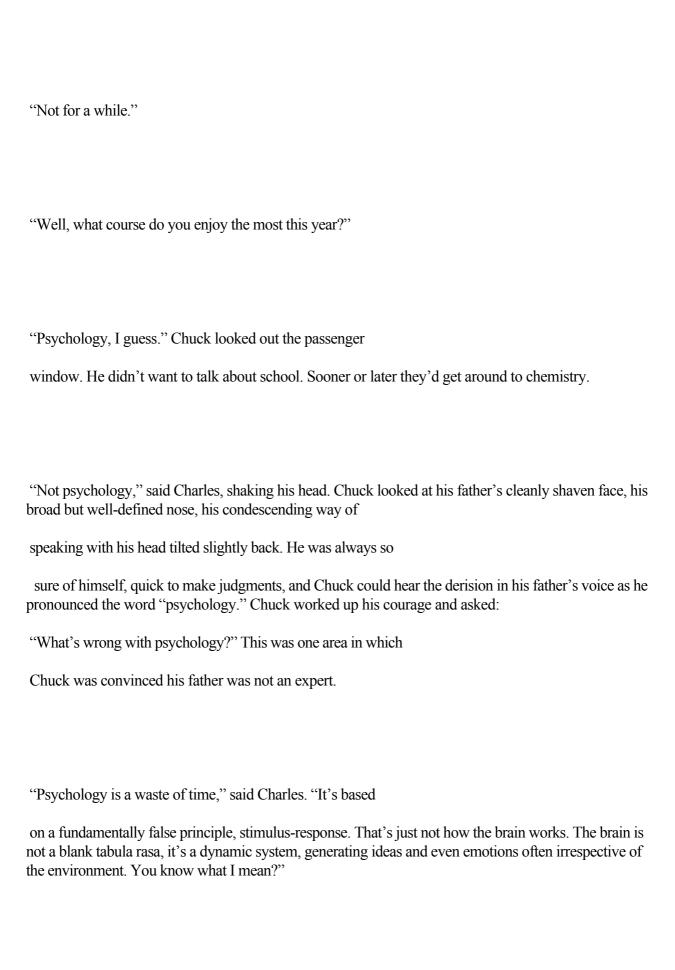
and kept up just for the tourists. The fact that no tourists ever came to Shaftesbury hadn't dawned on the town fathers.

Jean Paul got out at the regional high school at the northern end of town. His eagerness to start his day was

apparent in the rapid way he said good-bye. Even at that hour a group of his friends were waiting, and they entered the school together. Jean Paul was on the J.V. basketball team

and they had to practice before classes. Charles watched his younger son disappear, then pulled the car out into the street heading toward I-93 and the trip into Boston. They didn't hit traffic until they were in Massachusetts.

For Charles, driving had a hypnotic effect. Usually his mind trailed off into the complexities of antigens and
antibodies, protein structure and formation while he operated the car by some lower, more primitive parts of his brain. But today he began to find himself sensitive to Chuck's habitual silence, then irritated by it. Charles tried to imagine what was on his older son's mind. But try as he could, he realized he had absolutely no idea. Snatching quick looks at the
bored, expressionless face, he wondered if Chuck thought about girls. Charles realized that he didn't even know if Chuck dated.
"How is school going?" asked Charles as casually as possible.
"Fine!" said Chuck, immediately on guard.
Another silence.
"You know what you're going to major in?"
"Nah. Not yet."
"You must have some idea. Don't you have to start planning next year's schedule?"





Chuck got out of the car on Huntington Avenue and, after a perfunctory good-bye, walked away in the wet Boston snow. Charles watched him go. He looked like some late-sixties caricature, out of place even among his peers. The other students seemed brighter, more attentive to their appearance, and almost invariably in groups. Chuck walked by himself. Charles wondered if Chuck had been the most severely hurt by Elizabeth's illness and death. He'd hoped that Cathryn's presence would have helped, but ever since the wedding, Chuck had become more withdrawn and distant. Putting the car in gear, Charles headed across the Fenway toward Cambridge.

## **TWO**

Crossing the Charles River via the Boston University

Bridge, he began to plan his day. It was infinitely easier to deal with the complications of intracellular life than the uncertainties of child rearing. At Memorial Drive Charles turned right, then after a short distance, left into the parking area of the Weinburger Research Institute. His

spirits began to rise.

As he got out of his car, he noticed a significant number

of cars already there, which was unusual at that time of the morning; even the director's blue Mercedes was in its spot. Mindless of the weather, Charles stood for a moment puzzling over all the cars, then started toward the institute. It was a modern four-storied, brick-and-glass structure, somewhat akin to the nearby Hyatt Hotel but without the pyramid profile. The site was directly on the Charles River and nestled between Harvard and M.I.T., and directly across from the campus of Boston University. No wonder the institute had no trouble locating recruits.

The receptionist saw Charles approach through the mirrored glass and pressed a button, sliding open the thick glass door. Security was tight because of the value of the scientific instrumentation as well as the nature of some of the research, particularly the genetic research. Charles started across the carpeted reception area, saying good morning to the newly acquired and coy Miss Andrews, who tilted her head down and watched Charles from beneath her carefully plucked eyebrows. Charles wondered how long she would last. The life of receptionists at the institute was

very short.

With an exaggerated double take, Charles stopped at the
main hall and stepped back so he could see into the waiting room. In a haze of cigarette smoke a small crowd of people were milling about excitedly.
"Dr. Martel Dr. Martel," called one of the men.
Surprised to hear his name, Charles stepped into the room
and was instantly engulfed by people, all talking at the same time. The man who had first called to Charles stuck a microphone just inches from his nose.
"I'm from the Globe," shouted the man. "Can I ask you a few questions?"
Pushing the microphone to the side, Charles began a retreat to the hall.
"Dr. Martel, is it true you're going to take over the
study?" shouted a woman grabbing onto Charles's coat pocket.
"I don't give interviews," shouted Charles as he broke
from the small crowd. Inexplicably the reporters stopped at the threshold of the waiting room.

"What the hell is going on?" muttered Charles as he slowed to a fast walk. He hated the media. Elizabeth's illness had for some reason attracted the attention of the press and Charles had felt repeatedly raped as their private tragedy had been "trivialized" for people to read while having their morning coffee. He entered his lab and slammed the door.
Ellen Sheldon, Charles's laboratory assistant for the last six years, jumped. She'd been concentrating in the stillness of the lab while setting up the equipment to separate serum proteins. As usual she had arrived at seven fifteen to
prepare for Charles's invariable arrival at seven forty-five. By eight Charles liked to be into the day's work, especially now that things were going so well.
"If I slammed the door like that, I'd never hear the end of it," said Ellen, irritated. She was a darkly attractive
woman of thirty who wore her hair piled on her head except
for vagrant wisps which trailed down alongside her neck. When he'd hired her, Charles got some jealous kidding from his colleagues, but in truth, Charles had not appreciated her exotic beauty until he'd worked with her for several years. Her individual features were not exceptional; it was the
whole package that was intriguing. But as far as Charles was concerned, the most important aspects were her intellect, her eagerness, and her superb training at M.I.T.
"I'm sorry if I scared you," said Charles, hanging up his coat. "There's a bunch of reporters out there, and you know how I feel about reporters."
"We all know how you feel about reporters," agreed Ellen, going back to work.

Charles sat down at his desk and began going through his papers. His laboratory was a large rectangular room with a private office connected by a door in the back. Charles had eschewed the office and put a functional metal desk in the lab, converting the office into an animal room. The main animal area was a separate wing off the back of the institute, but Charles wanted some of his experimental
animals nearby in order to closely supervise their care. Good experimental results depended heavily on good care of the animals and Charles was particularly attentive to details.
"What are all the reporters doing here anyway?" asked Charles. "Did our fearless leader make some scientific breakthrough in his bathtub last night?"
"Be a little more generous," scolded Ellen. "Someone has to do the administrative work."
"Excuse me," said Charles with sarcastic exaggeration.
"Actually, it is something serious," said Ellen. "The episode with Brighton was leaked to the New York Times."
"These new generation doctors certainly like publicity," said Charles, shaking his head in disgust. "I thought that after that rave review in Time magazine a month ago he would have been satisfied. What the hell did he do?"  "Don't tell me you haven't heard?" said Ellen incredulously.
"Ellen, I come here to work. You of all people should know that."



"Am I hearing right?" asked Charles. "You feel sorry for
that little conniving bastard? I hope they throw his cheating ass right out of medicine. That guy is supposed to be a medical doctor. Cheating on research is as bad as cheating on patient care. No! It's worse. In research you can end up hurting many more people."
"I wouldn't be so quick to judge. Maybe he was under a lot
of pressure because of all the publicity. There could have been extenuating circumstances."
"When it comes to integrity, there are no extenuating circumstances."
"Well, I disagree. People have problems. We're not all supermen like you."
"Don't give me any of that psychology bullshit," said Charles. He was surprised at the malice implied in Ellen's comment.
"Okay, I won't. But a little human generosity would do you good, Charles Martel. You don't give a damn about other people's feelings. All you do is take." Ellen's voice trembled with emotion.
A strained silence fell over the lab. Ellen ostensibly
went back to her work. Charles opened his lab book, but he could not concentrate. He hadn't meant to



car. Could she bleed to death? Cathryn wasn't sure, but the possibility seemed real enough to terrify her. Cathryn hated anything associated with disease, blood, and hospitals. Why such things bothered her she wasn't sure, although a bad experience at age ten with a complicated case of appendicitis probably contributed. They'd had trouble making the

diagnosis, first at the doctor's office, then at the hospital. Even to that day she vividly remembered the white tiles and the antiseptic smell. But the worst had been the

ordeal of the vaginal exam. No one tried to explain anything. They just held her down. Charles knew all this, but he had still insisted on getting to the lab on schedule and letting Cathryn accompany Michelle.

Deciding there was a certain safety in numbers, Cathryn

sat down at the kitchen phone to call Marge Schonhauser to

see if she wanted a ride into Boston. If Tad was still in the hospital there was a good chance she would. The phone was picked up on the second ring. It was Nancy, the Schonhausers' sixteen-year-old daughter.

"My mother's already at the hospital."

"Well, I just thought I'd try," said Cathryn. "I'll see if

I can tell her while I'm there. But if I don't get her, tell her I called."

"Sure," said Nancy. "I know she'd be glad to hear from you."

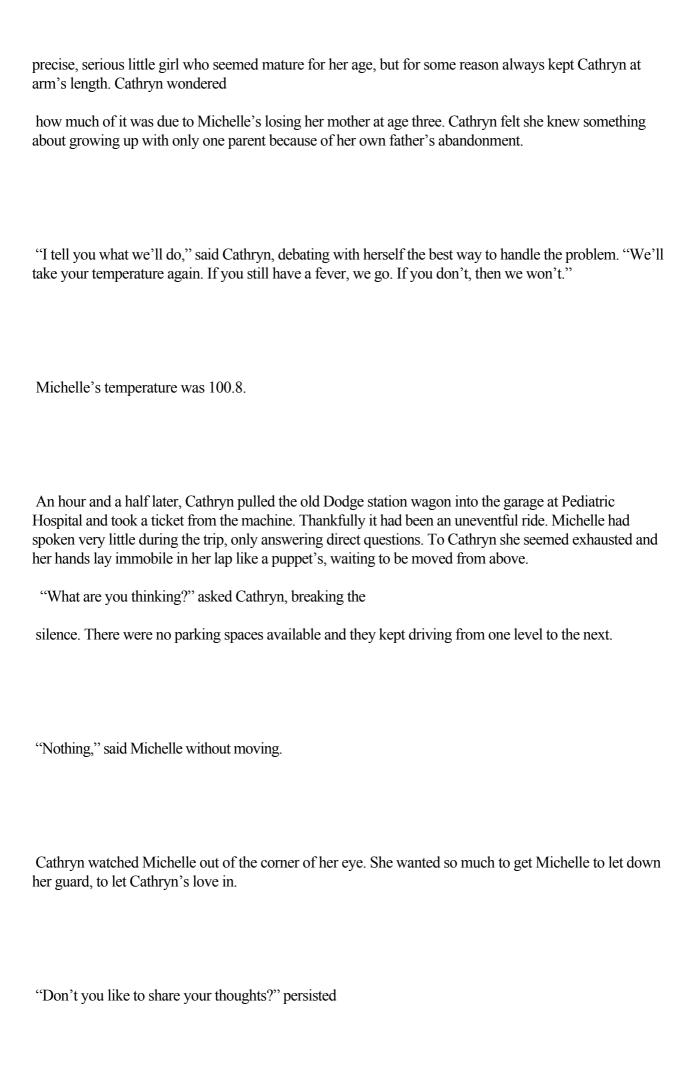
"How's Tad doing?" asked Cathryn. "Is he coming home soon?"

"He's awfully sick, Mrs. Martel. He had to have a marrow transplant. They tested all us kids and little Lisa was the only one who matched. He's living in a tent to protect him from germs."

"I'm terribly sorry to hear that," said Cathryn. She could feel a little of her strength drain away. She ha no idea what a marrow transplant was, but it sounded serious and scary. She said good-bye to Nancy and hung up the phone. For a moment she sat thinking, dreading the emotional aspect of	
the confrontation with Merge, feeling the guilt of not having called sooner. Tad's illness made her own fears about Michelle's nosebleed seem petty by comparison. Taking a deep breath, Cathryn went into the living room.	
Michelle was watching the Today show, propped up on the couch. After some orange juice and rest, she felt considerably better, but she was still upset. Although Charles had not said it, she was certain he was disappointed in her. The nosebleed had been the final aggravation.	;
"I called Dr. Wiley's office," said Cathryn as brightly as she could, "and the nurse said we should com as soon as possible. Otherwise we might have a long wait. So let's get the show on the road."	ie
"I feel much better," said Michelle. She forced a smile but her lips trembled.	
"Good," said Cathryn. "But you stay still. I'll get your coat and stuff." Cathryn started for the stairs.	
"Cathryn, I think I'm all right now. I think I can go to school." As if to substantiate her opinion, Miche swung	lle
her legs to the floor and stood up. Her smile wavered through a flurry of weakness.	

Cathryn turned and looked at her adopted daughter, feeling
a rush of affection for his little girl whom Charles loved so dearly. Cathryn had no idea why Michelle would want to deny her illness unless she was afraid of the hospital like
Cathryn was. She walked over and put her arms around the child, hugging her close. "You don't have to be afraid, Michelle."
"I'm not afraid," said Michelle, resisting Cathryn's embrace.
"You're not?" asked Cathryn, more to have something to
say. She was always taken by surprise to have her affection refused. Cathryn smiled self-consciously, her hands still resting on Michelle's shoulders.
"I think I should go to school. I don't have to take gym if you give me a note."
"Michelle. You haven't been feeling right for a month. You had a fever this morning. I think it's time we
did something."
"But I feel fine now, and want to go to school."
Taking her hands off Michelle's shoulders, Cathryn

examined the defiant face in front of her. In so many ways Michelle remained a mystery. She was such a





were even lots of plants. It was more like a luxury hotel than a big city hospital. The pediatric offices were equally nonthreatening. There were five patients already in Dr. Wiley's waiting room. To Michelle's disgust, none was over two years of age. She would have complained except she glimpsed the examining rooms through an open door and remembered why she was there. Leaning toward Cathryn she whispered, "You don't think I'll get a shot, do you?" "I have no idea," said Cathryn. "But afterwards if you feel up to it, we can do something fun. Whatever you like." "Could we go visit my father?" Michelle's eyes brightened. "Sure," said Cathryn. She parked Michelle next to an empty seat, then sat down herself. A mother and a whimpering five-year-old boy emerged from the examining room. One of the mothers with a tiny baby got up and went in. "I'm going to ask the nurse if I can use the phone," said Cathryn. "I want to find out where Tad Schonhauser is. You're okay, aren't you?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;I'm okay," said Michelle. "In fact, I feel better again."

"Good," said Cathryn as she got up. Michelle watched Cathryn's long brown hair bounce on her shoulders as she walked over to the nurse, then dialed the phone. Remembering her father say how much he liked it, Michelle wished hers
were the same color. Suddenly she wished she were really old, like twenty, so she could be a doctor and talk to Charles and work in his lab. Charles had said that doctors didn't have to give shots; the nurses do. Michelle hoped she didn't have to get a shot. She hated them.
"Dr. Martel," called Dr. Peter Morrison, standing at the doorway to Charles's lab. "Didn't you get my message?"
Straightening up from loading serum samples into an
automatic radioactivity counter, Charles looked at Morrison,
administrative head of the department of physiology. The man was leaning on the doorjamb, the fluorescent ceiling light reflecting off the lenses in his narrow tortoiseshell glasses. His face was taut, angry.
"I'll be by in ten or fifteen minutes," said Charles. "I
just have a few more important things to do."
Morrison considered Charles's statement for a moment.



you let me finish loading these samples. You go see Morrison and get it over with because I am going to need you to help draw blood from the rats."

Ten minutes later Charles found himself climbing the metal fire stairs to the second floor. He had no idea why Morrison wanted to see him, although he guessed it was going to be another pep talk, trying to get him to publish a paper for some upcoming meeting. Charles had very different ideas from

his colleagues about publication. It had never been his inclination to rush into print. Although research careers often were measured by the number of articles a doctor published, Charles's dogged dedication and brilliance had won him a greater respect from his colleagues, many of whom often said that it was men like Charles who made the great scientific discoveries. It was only the administration who complained.

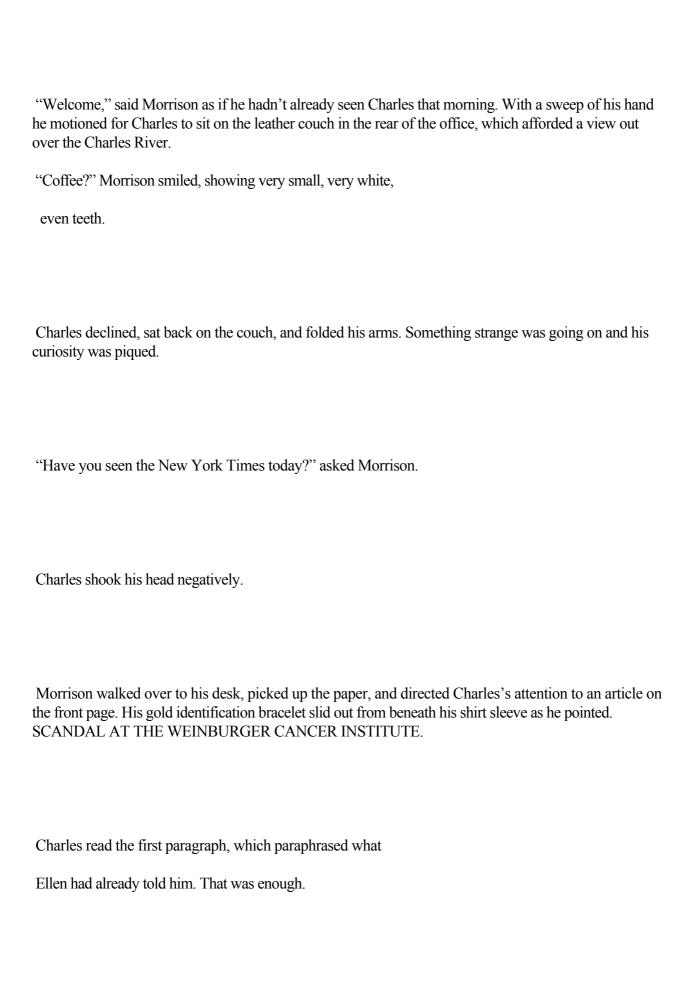
Dr. Morrison's office was in the administrative area on the second floor where the halls were painted a pleasant

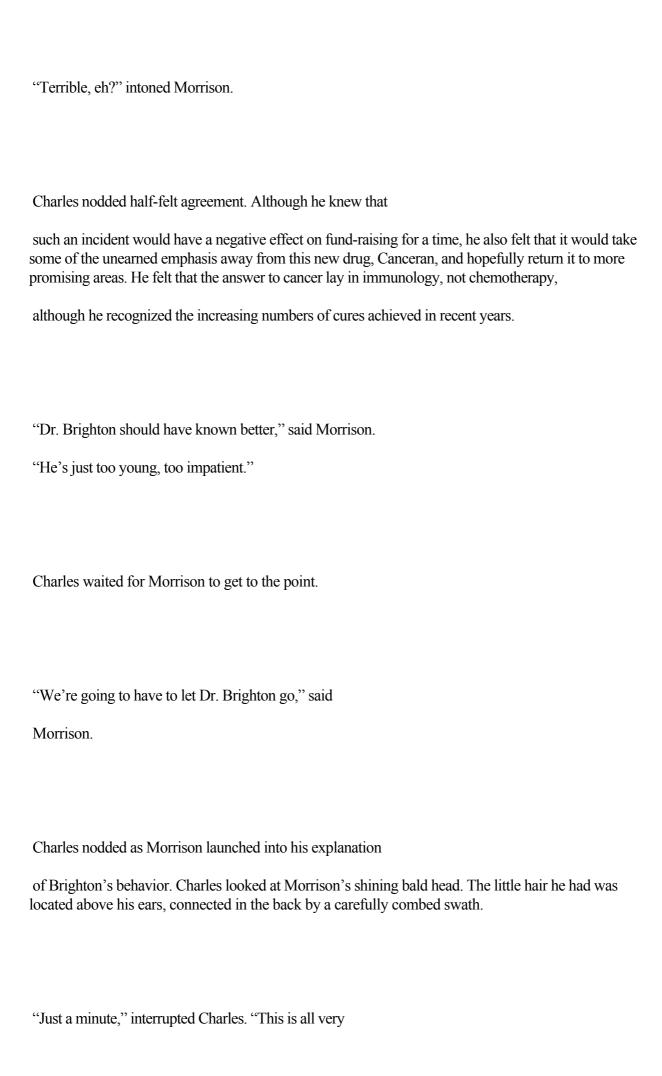
beige and hung with somber oil paintings of past directors clothed in academic robes. The atmosphere was a world apart from the utilitarian labs on the ground and first floors and gave the impression of a successful law office rather than a nonprofit medical organization. Its opulence never failed to irritate Charles; he knew that the money had come from people believing they were contributing to research.

In this frame of mind, Charles made his way to Morrison's office. Charles was about to enter when he noticed that all the secretaries in the administration area were watching him. There was that same feeling of suppressed excitement that Charles had sensed when he arrived that morning. It was as if everyone were waiting for something to happen.

As Charles went inside, Morrison stood up from his broad mahogany desk and stepped around into the room with his hand outstretched. His earlier irritated demeanor had vanished. By habit Charles shook the hand but was baffled by the gesture. He had nothing in common with this man. Morrison was dressed in a freshly pressed pin-striped suit, starched white shirt, and silk tie; his hand-sewn loafers were professionally shined. Charles was wearing his usual blue oxford shirt, open at the collar, with his tie loosened and tucked between the second and third buttons; his sleeves were rolled up above

his elbows. His trousers were baggy khakis and his shoes, scuffed cordovans.





"Of course," said Morrison, adjusting his cuff. His voice took on a more serious note and he brought the tips of his fingers together, forming a steeple. "The board of directors of the institute anticipated the New York Times article and had an emergency meeting last night. We decided that if we didn't act quickly the real victim of the Brighton affair would be the new and promising drug, Canceran. I assume you can understand this concern?"  "Of course," said Charles, but on the horizon of Charles's mind, a black cloud began to form.  "It was also decided that the only way to salvage the project was for the institute to publicly support the drug by appointing its most prestigious scientist to complete the tests. And I'm happy to say, Charles Martel, that you were chosen."  Charles closed his eyes and slapped a hand over his forchead. He wanted to storm out of the office, but he contained himself. Slowly he reopened his eyes. Morrison's thin lips were pulled into a smile. Charles could not tell if the man knew what his reaction was and was, therefore, teasing him, or if Morrison genuinely thought that he was conveying good news.  "I can't tell you how pleased I am," continued Morrison,  "that the board of directors picked someone from my department. Not that I'm surprised, mind you. We all have	interesting, but I do have an important experiment in progress downstairs. Is there something specific you wanted to tell me?"
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Brilliant! There are only two problems. One: it was many years ago; and two: you failed to publish the discovery! We should have been able to capitalize on it.
Instead, another institution got the credit. I wouldn't count on the hybridoma development to ensure your position with the board of directors."
"I didn't stop to publish the hybridoma process because it was just a single step in my experiment protocol. I've never been eager to rush into print."
"We all know that. In fact, it's probably the major reason you're where you are and not a department head."
"I don't want to be a department head," yelled Charles, beginning to lose his patience. "I want to do research, not
push around papers and go to benefits."
"I suppose that's meant as a personal insult," said  Morrison.
"You can take it as you will," said Charles, who had abandoned his efforts at controlling his anger. He stood up,
approached Morrison's desk, and pointed an accusing finger at the man. "I'll tell you the biggest reason I can't take over the Canceran project. I don't believe in it!"

"What the hell does that mean?" Morrison's patience had also worn thin.

"It means that cellular poisons like Canceran are not the ultimate answer to cancer. The presumption is that they kill cancer cells faster than normal cells so that after the malignancy is stopped the patient will still have enough normal cells to live. But that's only an interim approach. A real cure for cancer can only come from a better

understanding of the cellular processes of life, particularly the chemical communication between cells."

Charles began to pace the room, nervously running his

fingers through his hair. Morrison, by contrast, didn't move. He just followed Charles's gyrations with his eyes.

"I tell you," shouted Charles, "the whole attack on cancer is coming from the wrong perspective. Cancer cannot be considered a disease like an infection because it encourages

the misconception that there will be a magic bullet cure like an antibiotic." Charles stopped pacing and leaned over the desk toward Morrison. His voice was quieter, but more impassioned. "I've been giving this a lot of thought, Dr. Morrison. Cancer is not a disease in the traditional sense, but an unmasking of a more primitive life-form, like those that existed at the beginning of time when multicellular organisms were evolving. Think of it. At one time, eons ago, there were only single-celled creatures who selfishly ignored each other. But then, after a few million years, some of them teamed up because it was more efficient. They communicated chemically and this communication made multicellular

organisms like us possible. Why does a liver cell only do

what a liver cell does, or a heart cell, or a brain cell? The

answer is chemical communication. But cancer cells are not responsive to this chemical communication. They have broken free, gone back to a more primitive stage, like those

single-cell organisms that existed millions of years ago. Cancer is not a disease but rather a clue to the basic organization of life. And immunology is the study of this communication."

	les ended his monologue leaning forward on his hands over Morrison's desk. There was an rard silence. Morrison cleared his throat, pulled out his leather desk chair, and sat down.
	y interesting," he said. "Unfortunately, we are not in a metaphysical business. And I must remind nat the immunological aspect of cancer has been worked on for more
than a	a decade and contributed very little to the prolongation of the cancer victim's life."
"That	t's the point," interrupted Charles. "Immunology will give a cure, not just palliation."
for im	se," said Morrison softly. "I listened to you, now listen to me. There is very little money available amunology at the present time. That's a fact. The Canceran project carries a huge grant from both ational Cancer Institute as well as the American Cancer Society. The Weinburger needs that y."
	les tried to interrupt, but Morrison cut him off. Charles slumped back into a chair. He could feel the it of the institute's bureaucracy surround him like a giant octopus.
	ison ritually removed his glasses and placed them on his blotter. "You are a superb scientist, es. We all know that, and that's why we need you at this moment. But
perhap there	re also a maverick and in that sense more tolerated than appreciated. You have enemies here, ps motivated by jealousy, perhaps by your self-righteousness. I have defended you in the past. But are those who would just as soon see you go. I'm telling you this for your own good. At the ng last night I mentioned that you might refuse taking over the Canceran project. It was decided that did,
-	position here would be terminated. It will be easy enough to get someone to take your place on a et like this."



Charles stumbled out of Morrison's office in a daze, crushed at the prospect of being forced away from his own research at such a critical time. Aware of the quizzical

stare from Morrison's prim secretary, Charles half ran to the fire stairs, banging open the door. He descended slowly, his mind reeling. Never in his life had anyone ever threatened to fire him. Although he felt confident he could get a job, the idea of being cast adrift even for a short time was

devastating, especially with all his ongoing financial obligations. When he had given up his private practice, Charles had given up his status as moderately well-to-do. On his research salary, they barely made it, especially with Chuck in college.

Reaching the first floor, Charles turned down the hall, toward his lab. He needed some time to think.

## **THREE**

It was their turn. A nurse who looked like she stepped out of a 1950s Doris Day movie called out Michelle's name and

held the door open. Michelle gripped her stepmother's hand as they entered the inner office. Cathryn wasn't sure which one of them was more tense.

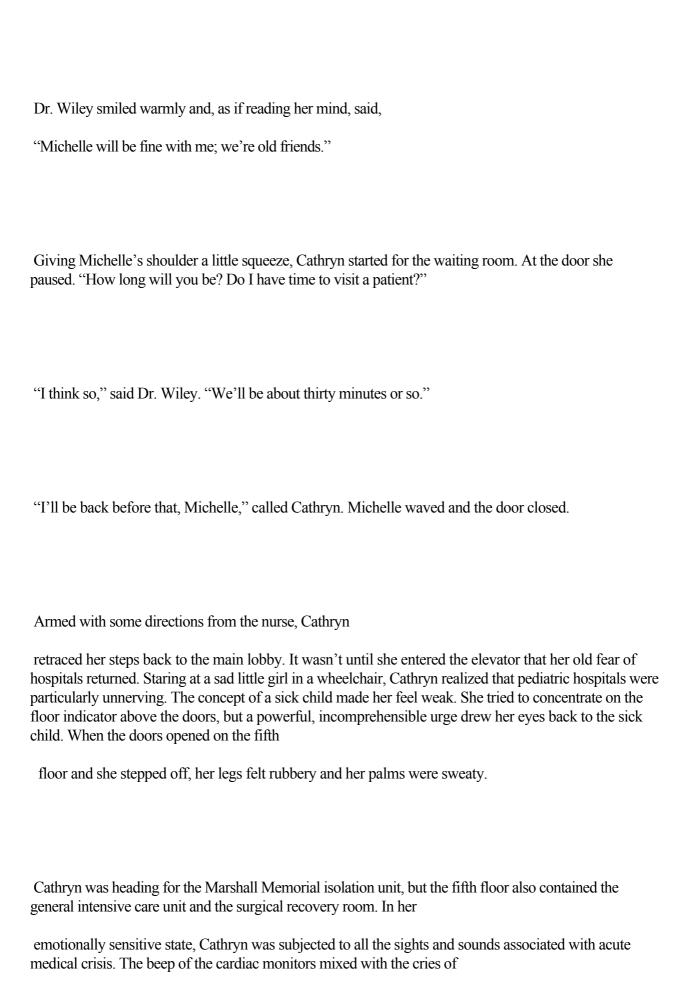
Dr. Wiley looked up from a chart, peering over half

glasses. Cathryn had never met Dr. Jordan Wiley, but all the children knew him. Michelle had told Cathryn that she remembered coming to him for the chicken pox four years ago when she was eight. Cathryn was immediately taken by the attractiveness of the man. He was in his late fifties and exuded that comfortably paternal air that people traditionally associate with doctors. He was a tall

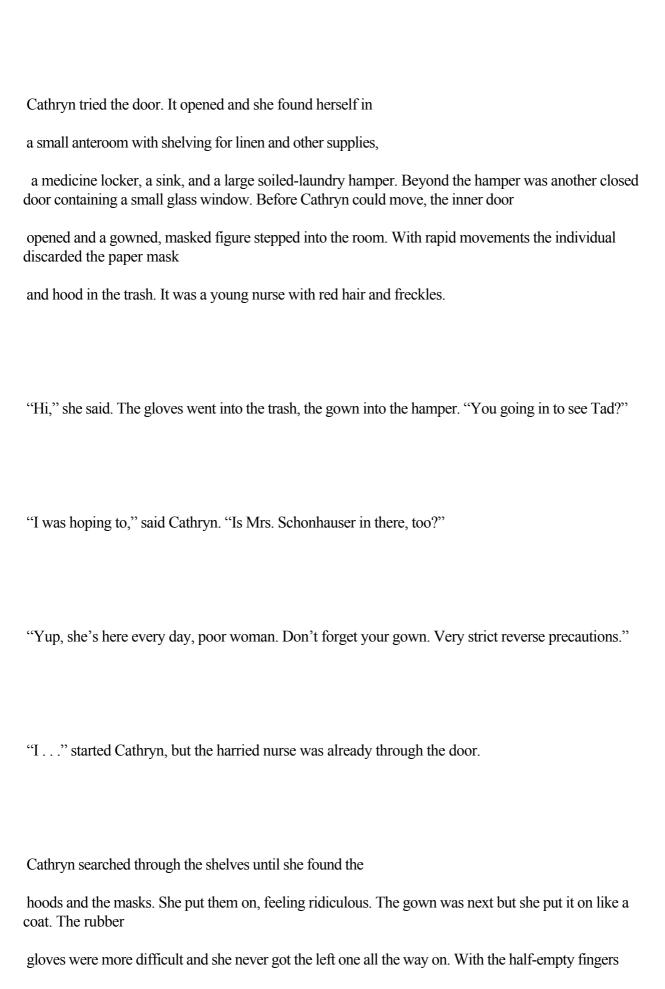
individual with closely cropped graying hair and a bushy gray mustache. He wore a small, hand-tied red bow tie which gave him a unique, energetic look. His hands were large but gentle as he placed the chart on his desk and leaned forward.

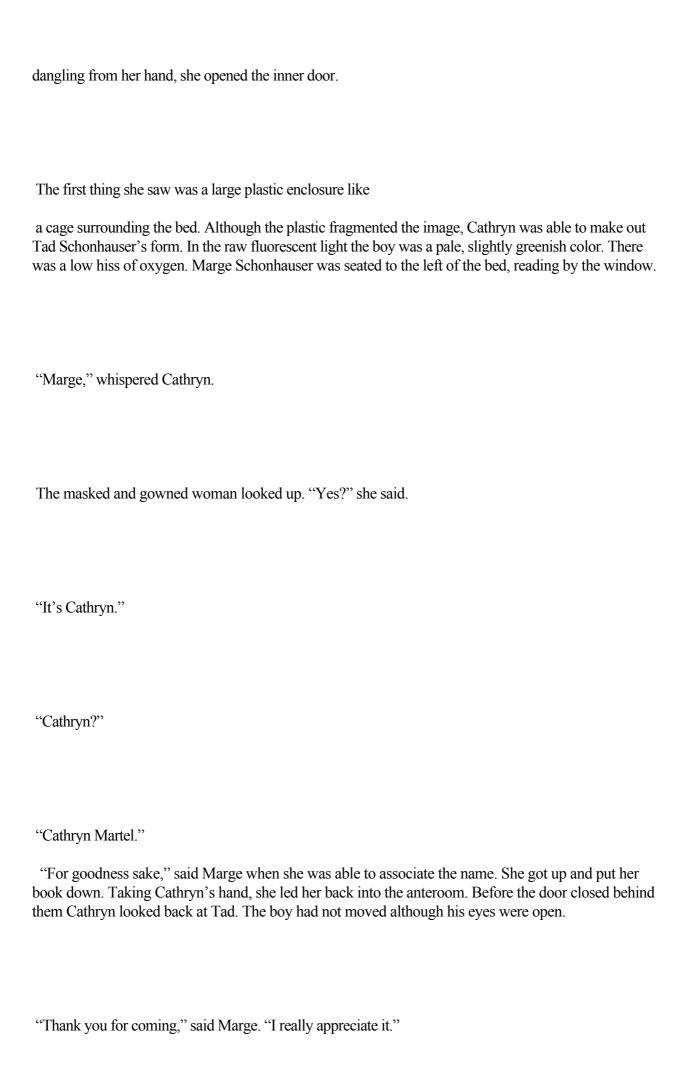
"My, my," said Dr. Wiley. "Miss Martel, you have become a lady. You look very beautiful, a little pale,





terrified children. Everywhere there was a profusion of tubes, bottles, and hissing machines. It was an alien world
populated with a bustling staff who seemed, to Cathryn, to be unreasonably detached from the horror around them. The fact that these children were being helped in the long run was
lost on Cathryn.
Pausing to catch her breath in a narrow hallway lined with windows, Cathryn realized that she was crossing from one building to another within the medical center. The hall was a peaceful bridge. She was alone for a moment until a man in a wheelchair with DISPATCHER written across the back motored past her. Glass test tubes and jars filled with all sorts of body fluid samples jangled in a metal rack. He smiled, and Cathryn smiled back. She felt better. Fortified, she
continued on.
The Marshall Memorial isolation unit was easier for
Cathryn to deal with. All the doors to the rooms were closed and there were no patients to be seen. Cathryn approached the nurses' station which seemed more like a ticket counter at a modern airport than the nerve center for a hospital ward. It was a large square area with a bank of TV monitors. A clerk looked up and cheerfully asked if he could help her.
"I'm looking for the Schonhauser boy," said Cathryn.
"Five twenty-one," said the clerk pointing.
Cathryn thanked him and walked over to the closed door. She knocked softly. "Just go right in," called the clerk.
"But don't forget your gown."







"I'm terribly sorry," said Cathryn, at a loss for

something to say. She wished she'd called weeks ago. Marge was older than she, closer to Charles's age. But they got along well, and Marge had been gracious and helpful when Cathryn had first come to Shaftesbury. The other New

Englanders had been very cold.

"I don't mean to take it out on you," said Marge, "but I

feel so upset. The doctors told me this morning that Tad

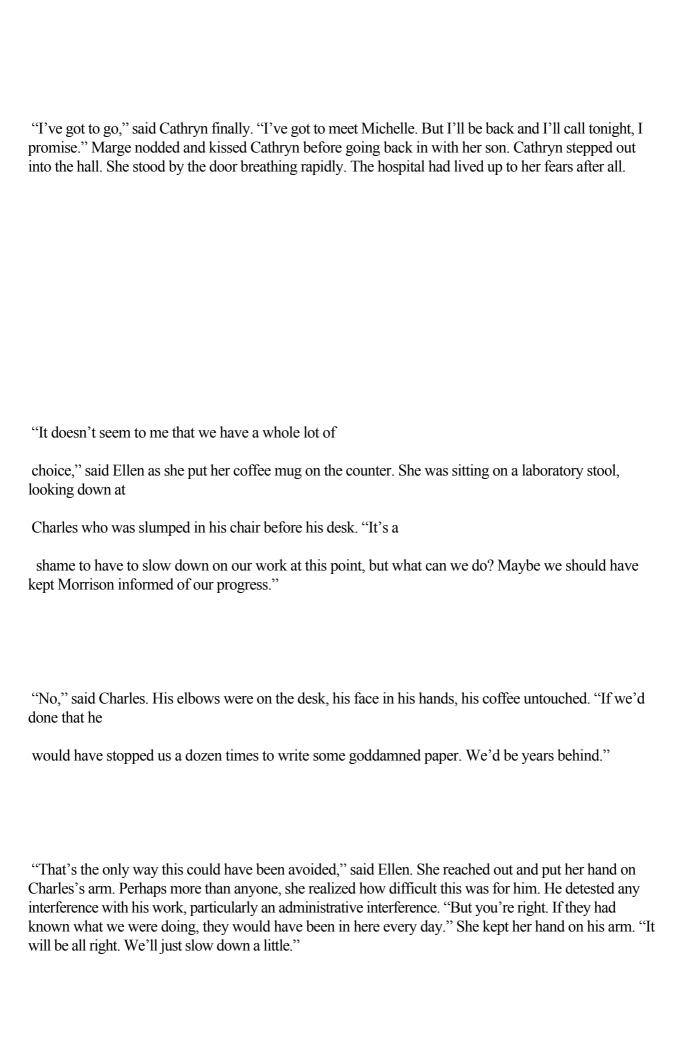
might be terminal. They're trying to prepare me. I don't want him to suffer, but I don't want him to die."

Cathryn was stunned. Terminal? Die? These were words that referred to old people, not to a young boy who just a few weeks ago was in their kitchen bursting with life and energy. With difficulty she resisted an urge to run back downstairs. Instead she hugged Marge.

"I just can't help but ask why," sobbed Marge, struggling to control herself and allowing Cathryn to hold her. "They

say the good Lord has His reasons, but I'd like to know why. He was such a good boy. It seems so unfair."

Marshaling her strength, Cathryn began to talk. She hadn't planned what she was going to say. It just came out. She talked about God and death in a way that surprised her because she wasn't religious in the traditional sense. She'd been brought up a Catholic and had even talked briefly of becoming a nun when she was ten. But during college she had rebelled against the ritual of the Church and had become an agnostic of sorts, not bothering to examine her beliefs. Yet she must have made sense because Marge responded; whether it was to the content or just the human companionship, Cathryn didn't know. But Marge calmed down and even managed a weak smile.



Charles looked up into Ellen's eyes, which were so dark

that the pupils merged with the irises. He was acutely aware of her hand. Since their affair she'd scrupulously avoided touching him. Now in the same morning she'd accused him of insensitivity and held his arm: such confusing signals. "This Canceran nonsense is going to take some time," he said. "Six months to a year, and that's only if everything goes very smoothly."

"Why not do Canceran and our own work?" said Ellen. "We

can extend our hours, work nights. I'll be willing to do it for you."

Charles stood up. Work nights? He looked at this woman

whom he vaguely remembered sleeping with; it seemed so long ago. Her skin had been that same olive color as Elizabeth's and Michelle's. Although he had been physically attracted to Ellen, it had never seemed right with her; they were partners, coworkers, colleagues, not lovers. It had been an awkward affair; their lovemaking clumsy, like adolescents. Cathryn wasn't as beautiful as Ellen but from the beginning it was more comfortable, more fulfilling.

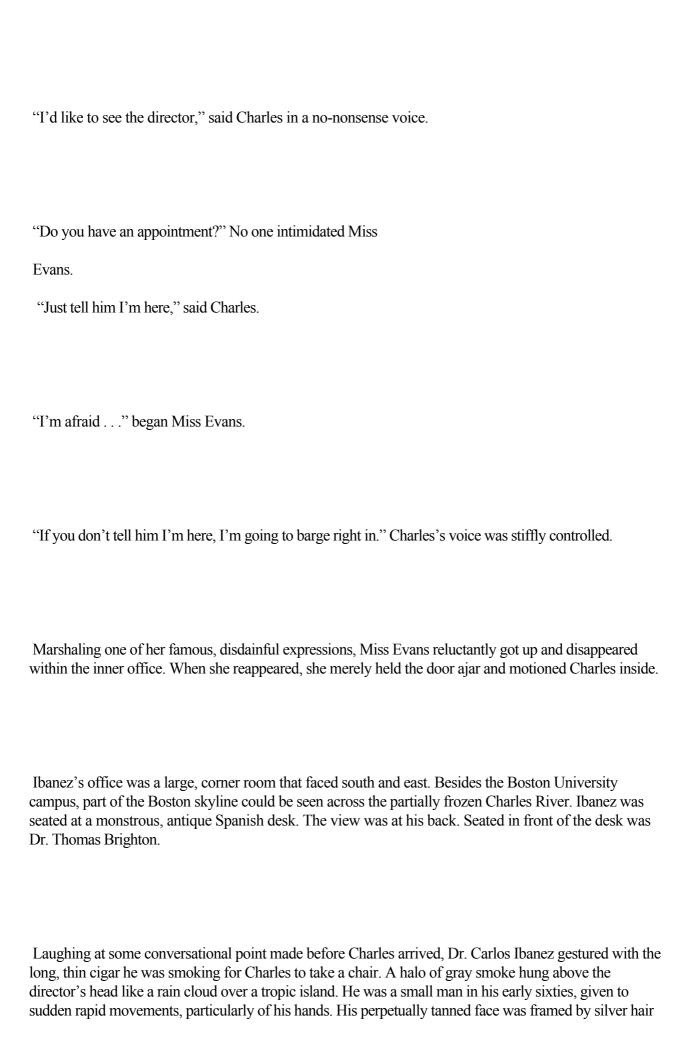
"I've got a better idea," said Charles. "Why don't I go

over Morrison's head to the director and just lay the cards on the table, explain that it's infinitely more important for

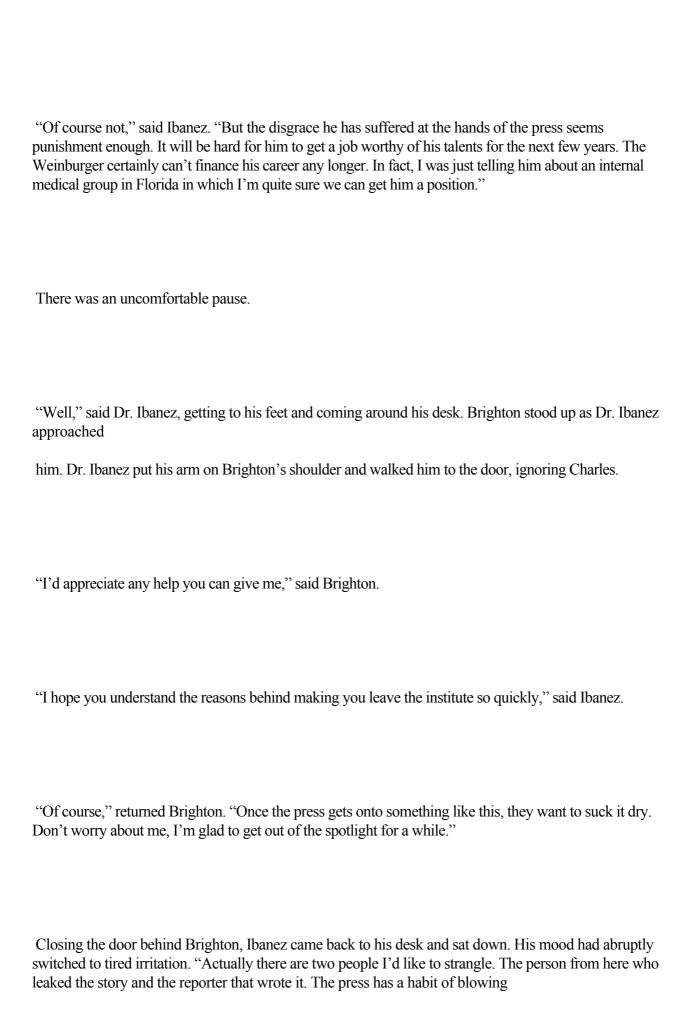
us to stay with our own work."

"I can't imagine it will help," cautioned Ellen. "Morrison told you the decision came from the board of directors. Dr. Ibanez is not going to reverse that. I think you're just asking for trouble."



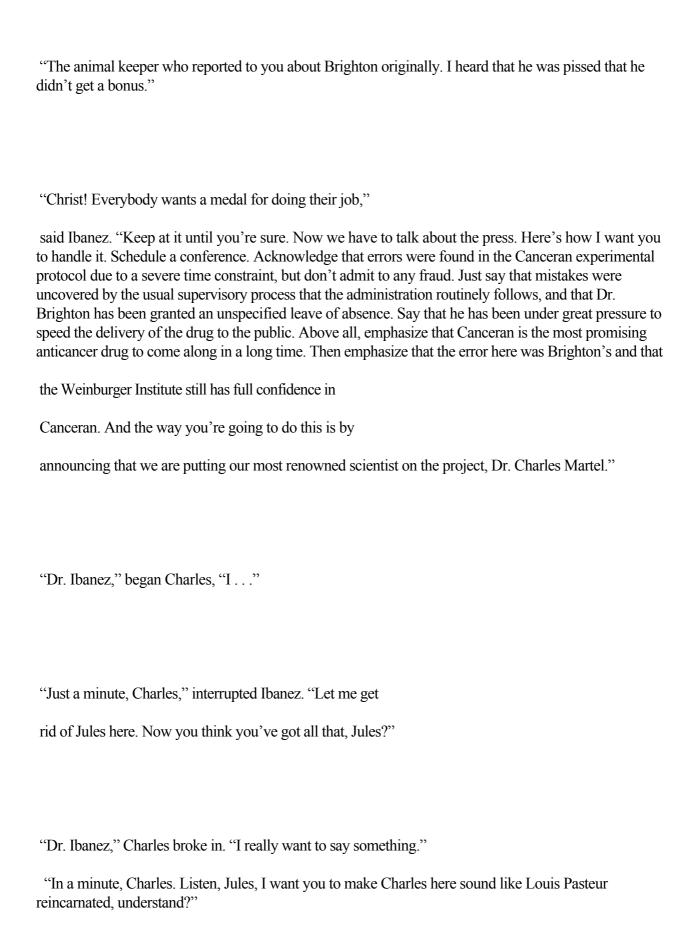






things out of proportion and this is a good example. Front page New York Times! Absurd!"
"It seems to me," said Charles, "that you're blaming the wrong people. After all, this is a 'moral issue,' not just an inconvenience."
Dr. Ibanez eyed Charles across the expanse of his desk.  "Dr. Brighton should not have done what he did, but the moral issue does not bother me as much as the potential damage to the institute and to the drug, Canceran. That would change this from a minor affair to a major catastrophe."
"I just don't think that professional integrity is a minor affair," said Charles.
"I hope you're not lecturing me, Dr. Martel. Let me tell you something. Dr. Brighton was not motivated by any evil intent. He believed in Canceran and wanted to speed up its availability to the public. His fraud was the result of youthful impatience, which we've all been guilty of in one
degree or another. Unfortunately in this case his enthusiasm got out of hand with the result being we've lost a very talented man, a phenomenal money raiser."
Charles moved to the edge of his seat. For him the issue was crystal clear and he was astounded that he and Ibanez could view the event from such fundamentally different perspectives. On the verge of unleashing a diatribe on the
difference between right and wrong, Charles was interrupted by Miss Evans.





"You got it," said Bellman excitedly. "Now, Dr. Martel. Can you tell me your latest publications."

"Goddammit," shouted Charles, slamming his lab books down on Ibanez's desk. "This is a ridiculous conversation. You

know I haven't published anything recently, mostly because I didn't want to take the time. But papers or no papers, I've been making extraordinary progress. And it's all here in these books. Let me show you something."

Charles reached over to open one of the lab books but Dr. Ibanez restrained his arm. "Charles, calm down. You're not on trial here, for God's sake. Actually it's probably better you haven't published. Right now interest as well as funding for immunological cancer research has slackened. It probably wouldn't be good for Jules to have to admit you've been working exclusively in this area because the press might suggest you were unqualified to take over Canceran."

"Give me strength," groaned Charles to himself through clenched teeth. He stared at Ibanez, breathing heavily. "Let me tell you something! The whole medical community is approaching cancer from the wrong perspective. All this work on chemotherapeutic agents like Canceran is only for palliative purposes. A real cure can only come from better understanding of the chemical communication among cells of which the immune system is a direct descendant. Immunology is the answer!" Charles's voice had built to a crescendo, and

the last sentence held the fervor of a religious fanatic. Bellman looked down and shuffled his feet. Ibanez took a long drag on his cigar, blowing the smoke in a long, thin stream.

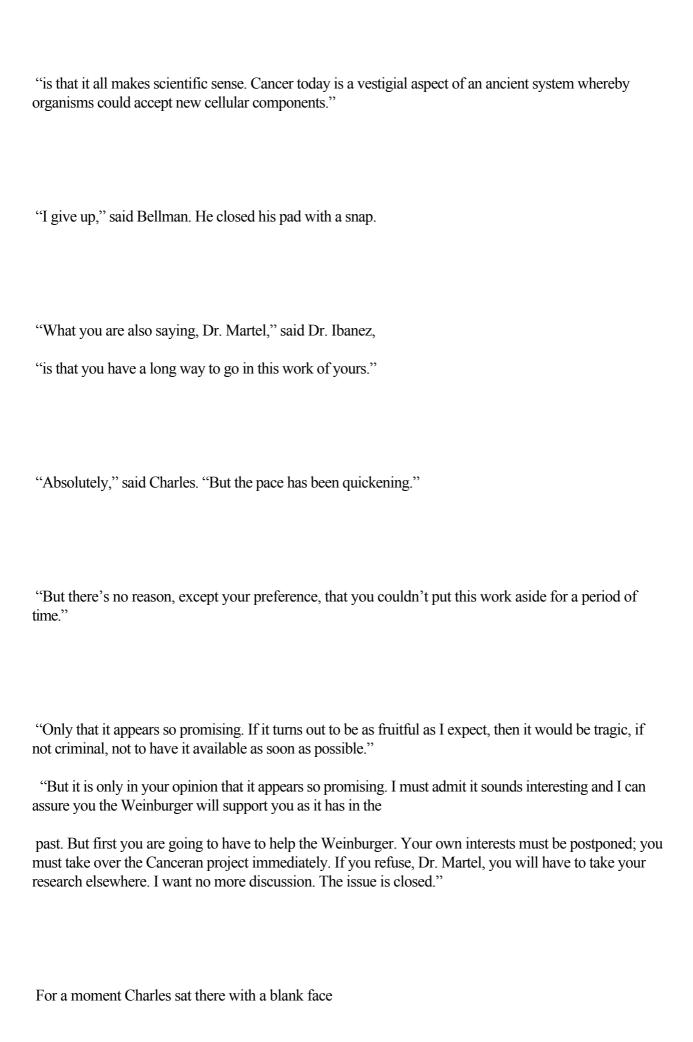
"Well," said Dr. Ibanez, breaking the embarrassing silence. "That's an interesting point, Charles, but I'm

afraid not everybody would agree with you. The fact of the matter is that while there is plenty of funding for chemotherapy research, there is very little for immunological studies . . ."

"That's because chemotherapy agents like Canceran can be patented whereas immunological processes, for the most part, cannot be," said Charles, impulsively interrupting Dr. Ibanez.









Dr. Ibanez laughed. "At least that part will be easy. Charles has never cared for publicity."
"You sure he's the best man to take over Canceran?" said Bellman.
"He's the only man. No one else is available who has his professional reputation. All he has to do is finish the study."
"But if he screws up somehow" worried Bellman.
"Don't even suggest it," said Ibanez. "If he mishandles Canceran at this point, we'd have to do something drastic. Otherwise we'll all be looking for a job."
Disgusted with himself, Charles dragged his way back down
to his lab. For the first time in almost ten years, Charles nostalgically recalled private practice. It wasn't the
one-on-one of clinical medicine that he longed for, but rather the autonomy. Charles was accustomed to being in control and until that moment he had not realized how little control he had at the Weinburger.

For the second time in the day, Charles slammed the door to his lab, rattling the glassware on the shelves and
terrifying the rats and mice in the animal room. Also for the second time he startled Ellen, who deftly caught a pipette she'd knocked off the counter when she spun around. She was about to complain but when she saw Charles's face, she remained silent.
In a fit of misdirected rage, Charles slung the heavy lab books at the counter. One hit the floor while the others crashed into a distillation apparatus sending shards of glass all over the room. Ellen's hand flew up to protect her face as she stepped back. Still not satisfied, Charles picked up an Erlenmeyer flask and hurled it into the sink. Ellen had never seen Charles like this in all the six years they'd worked together.
"If you tell me I told you so, I'll scream," said Charles, flinging himself onto his metal swivel chair.
"Dr. Ibanez wouldn't listen?" asked Ellen, guardedly.
"He listened. He just wouldn't buy, and I caved in like a paper tiger. It was awful."
"I don't think you had any choice," said Ellen. "So don't be so hard on yourself. Anyway, what's the schedule?"
"The schedule is that we finish the Canceran efficacy study."
"Do we start right away?" asked Ellen.



Morrison's small eyes became suffused with a pale crimson.

Minute beads of perspiration sprung up on his forehead as he spoke: "All I can say is that if it weren't for our current emergency, Charles, I'd see that you were thrown out of the Weinburger today. Lucky for you we can't afford another scandal. But you'd better shine on this Canceran project if you have any intentions of staying on staff here."

Without waiting for a response, Morrison stalked out of the lab. Charles was left with the low hum of the refrigerator compressors and the ticks of the automatic

radioactivity counter. These were familiar sounds and they had a soothing effect on Charles. Maybe, he thought, the Canceran affair wouldn't be too bad; maybe he could do the

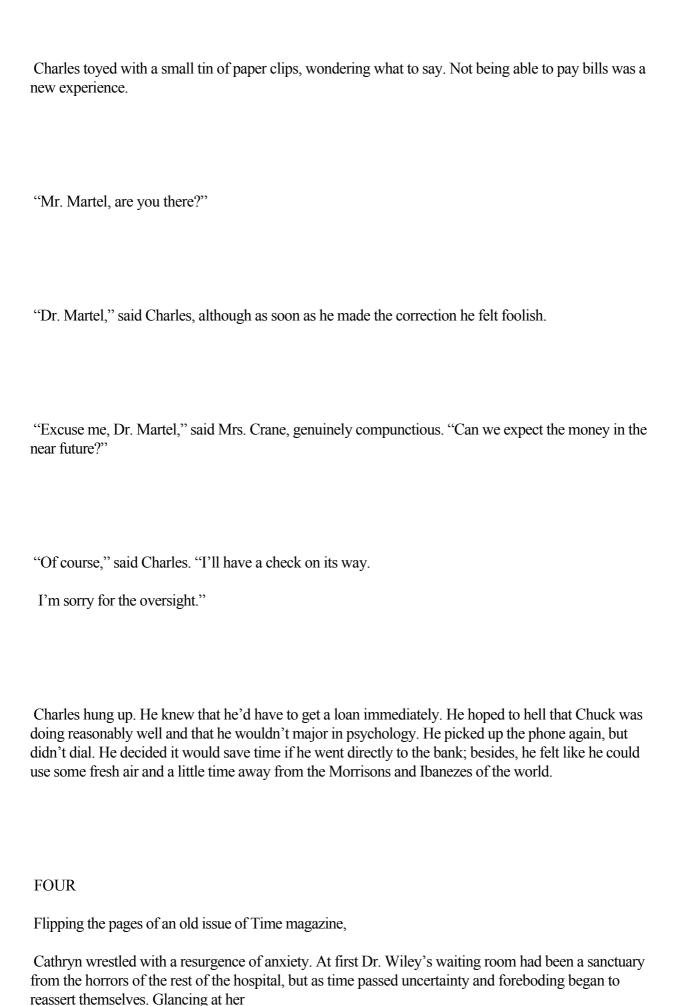
study quickly, provided the experimental protocol was decent; maybe Ellen was right and they could do both projects by working some nights.

Suddenly the phone began to ring. He debated answering, hearing it ring three times, then four. On the fifth ring he picked it up.

"Hello," said the caller. "This is Mrs. Crane from the bursar's office at Northeastern University."

"Yes," said Charles. It took him a moment to associate the school with Chuck.

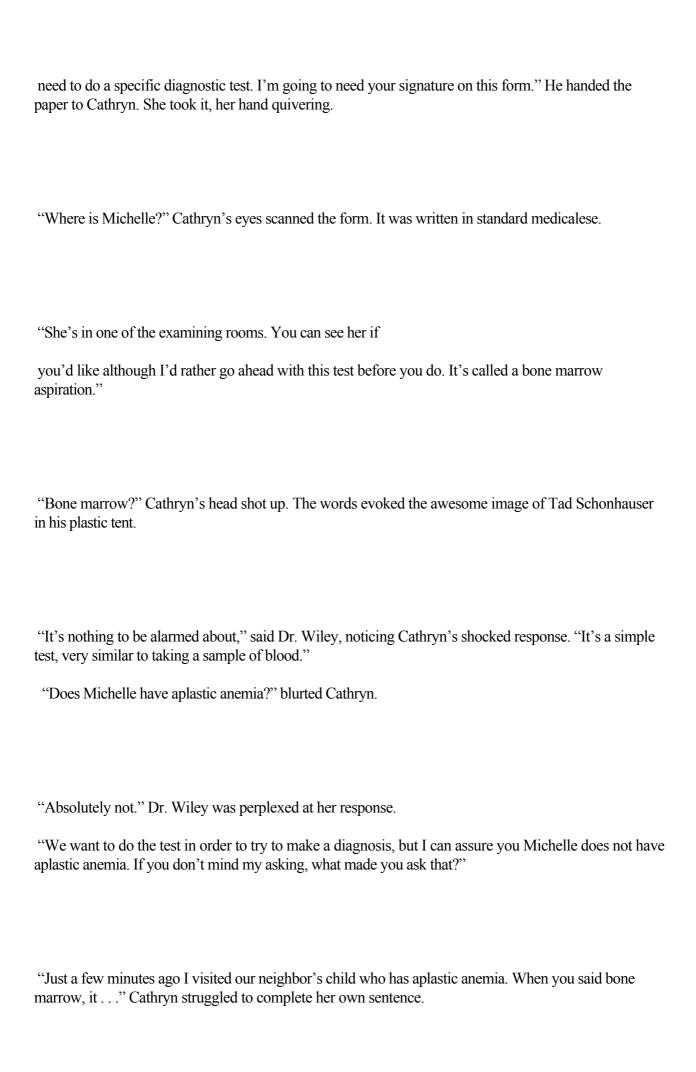
"Sorry to bother you," said Mrs. Crane. "But your son gave us the number. It seems that the \$1650 semester tuition is way overdue."

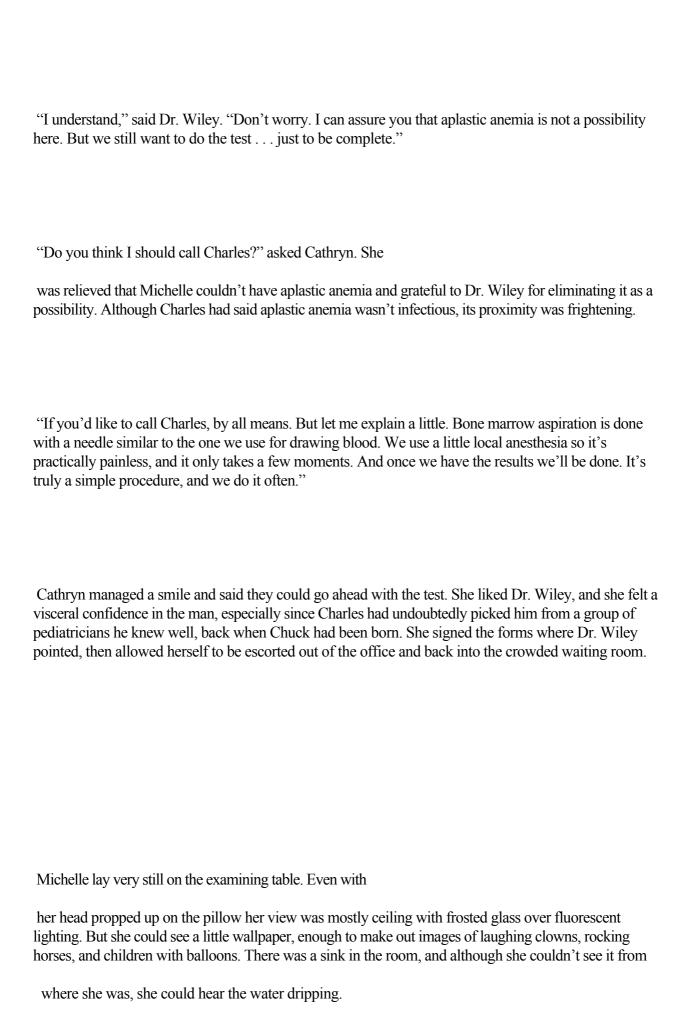


watch she saw that Michelle had been back in the examining area for over an hour. Something must be wrong!
She began to fidget, crossing and uncrossing her legs, checking her watch repeatedly. To her discomfort there was no conversation in the room and almost no movement except for the hands of a woman who was knitting and the erratic gestures of two toddlers playing with blocks. All at once Cathryn realized what was bothering her. Everything was too flat, without emotion. It was like a two-dimensional picture of a three-dimensional scene.
She stood up, unable to sit still for another moment.  "Excuse me," she said walking over to the nurse. "My little girl, Michelle Martel. Do you have any idea how much longer she'll be?"
"The doctor hasn't told us," said the nurse politely. She sat with her back painfully straight so that her substantial buttocks protruded out the back of her chair.
"She's been in there for a long time," said Cathryn, searching for some reassurance.
"Dr. Wiley is very complete. I'm sure she'll be out shortly."
"Does he frequently take over an hour?" asked Cathryn. She felt superstitiously ambivalent about asking any questions at all, as if the asking would influence the ultimate outcome.





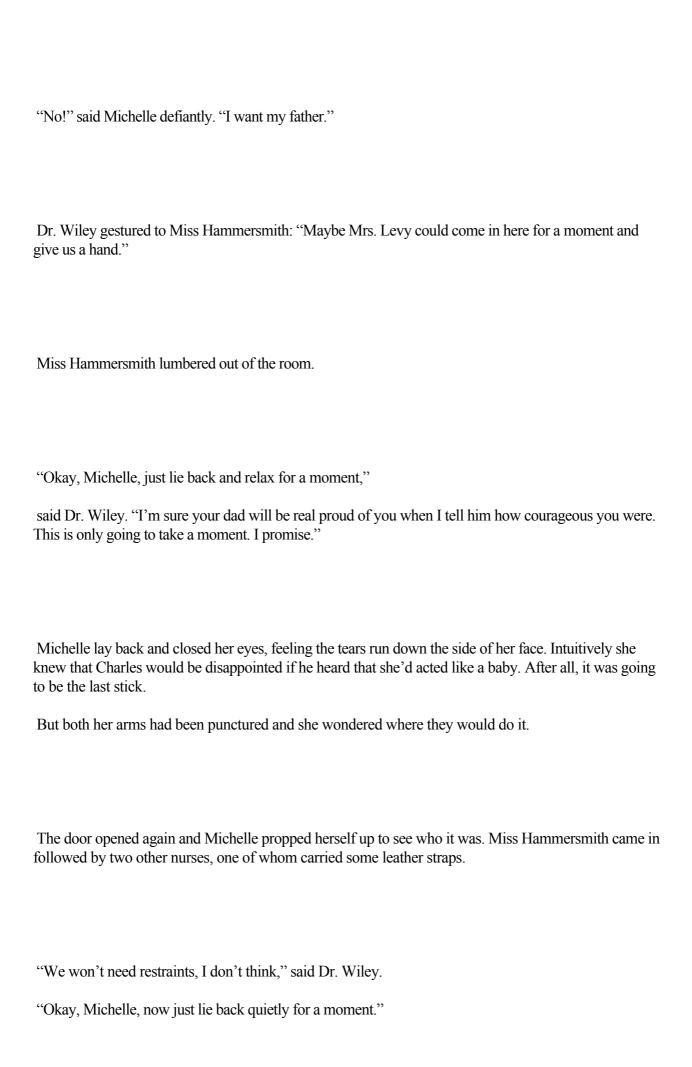




For Michelle the hospital had lived up to her fears. She'd been stuck with needles three times. Once in each arm and once in a finger. Each time she'd asked if it was the last but no one would say, so she was afraid it might happen again, especially if she moved too much, so she stayed very still.
She felt embarrassed to be dressed so scantily. She had on a nightie of sorts, but it was open in the back, and she
could feel her skin on the paper which covered the table. By looking down, she could see the mounds made by her toes beneath the white sheet that covered her. Even her hands were under the cover, clasped together over her stomach. She'd
been shivering a little but didn't tell anyone. All she
wanted was her clothes and to go home. Yet she knew the fever was back and she was afraid someone might notice and then
want to stick her again. They had told her that the reason they needed her blood was to find out why sh kept getting the fever.
There was a scraping sound, and the door to the examining room opened. It was the fat nurse, and she was backing into
the room so that her form filled the doorway. She was pulling something, and Michelle heard the telltale sound of metal jangling against metal. Once clear of the door, the nurse swung around, pushing a small table on wheels. The table was covered with a blue towel. As far as Michelle was concerned, it didn't look good.
"What's that?" she asked anxiously.
"Some things for the doctor, sweetheart," said Miss Hammersmith, as if she were talking about treats.



Dr. Wiley tossed the towel onto the counter by the sink
and plucked out a pair of rubber gloves from a package Miss
Hammersmith held open for him.
With growing dismay, Michelle watched him pull the gloves onto each hand, snapping the wrist portion into place and tugging on each finger in turn.
"I don't want any more needles," said Michelle, her eyes filling with tears. "I just want to go home." She tried not to cry but the harder she tried, the less successful she was.
"Now, now," soothed Miss Hammersmith as she began stroking
Michelle's hair.
Michelle parried Miss Hammersmith's hand and tried to sit up, but she was restrained by a cinch about her waist.
"Please," she managed.
"Michelle!" called Dr. Wiley sharply, then his voice softened. "I know you don't feel well, and I know this is hard for you, but we have to do it. It will be over in a
moment if you help us."



"Come on, sweetheart," cajoled Miss Hammersmith, coming up alongside Michelle. One of the other nurses went around to the opposite side while the nurse who had been carrying

leather straps went down to the foot of the table. "Dr. Wiley is the best doctor in the world and you should be so thankful he's taking care of you," said Miss Hammersmith as she pulled Michelle's sheet down over the child's legs. Keeping her arms stiffly against her side, Michelle half-heartedly tried to resist when Miss Hammersmith pulled up the nightie to expose the child's body from her nipples to her bony knees.

She watched while the nurse whisked the towel from the table with the wheels. Dr. Wiley busied himself with the

instruments on it, his back to her. She could hear the tinkle of glass and the sound of fluid. When the doctor turned, he had a wet piece of cotton in each hand. "I'm just going to

clean your skin a little," he explained as he began scrubbing

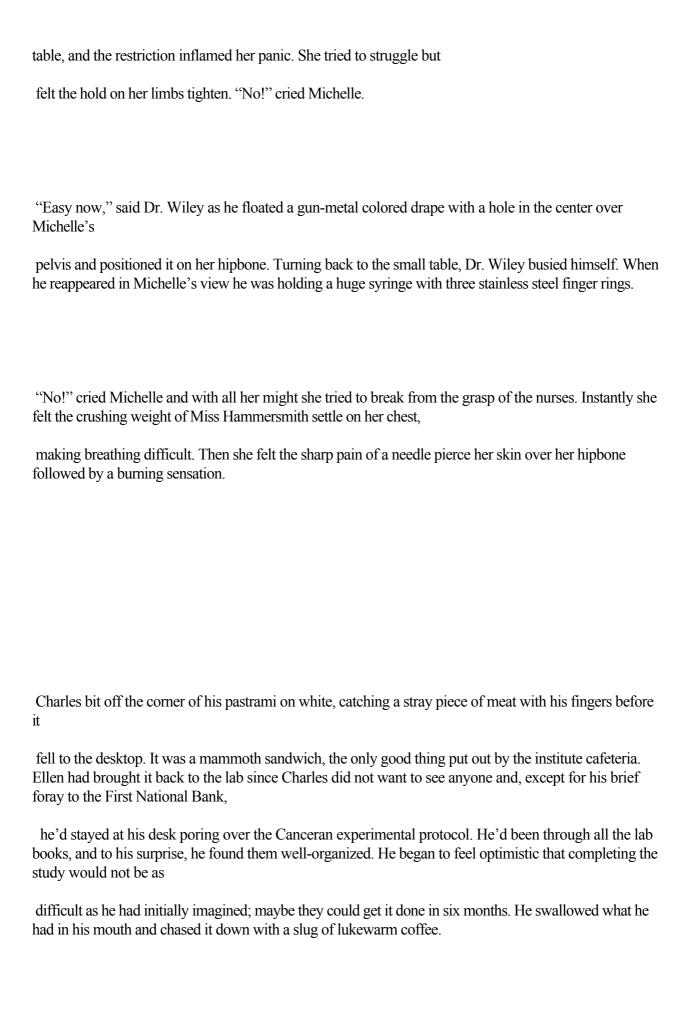
Michelle's hipbone.

The water felt alarmingly cold to Michelle as it ran down her hip and pooled beneath her buttocks. This was a new experience, not like the previous needles. She strained to see what was happening, but the doctor gently urged her to lie back.

"It will be over in just a moment," said Miss Hammersmith. Michelle looked at the faces of the nurses. They were all smiling but they were fake smiles. Michelle began to feel panic. "Where are you going to stick me?" she shouted, trying again to sit up.

As soon as she moved, she felt strong arms grip her and

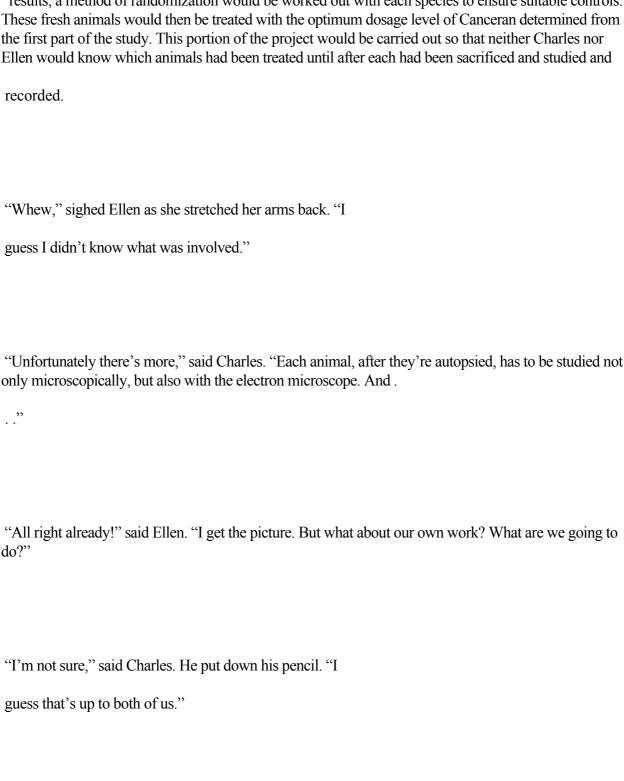
force her back. Even her ankles were locked in an iron grasp. She was pressed firmly back onto the



"The one good thing about this project," said Charles, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, "is the size of
the grants. For the first time we've got money to burn. I'll bet we can get that new automatic counter we've wanted as well as a new ultra centrifuge."
"I think we should get a new chromatography unit," said Ellen.
"Why not?" said Charles. "Having been railroaded into this project, we owe it to ourselves." He put the sandwich back down on the paper plate and picked up his pencil. "Here's the way we'll handle this thing. We'll start out with a dose of 1/16 of the LD50."
"Wait," said Ellen. "Being in immunology, it's been a while since I've done this kind of thing. Refresh me. The
LD50 is the dose of a drug that causes 50 percent death in a large population of test animals. Right?"
"Right," said Charles. "We have the LD50 for mice, rats, rabbits, and monkeys from the toxicity studies done on Canceran before they started the efficacy studies. Let's start out with the mice. We'll use the RX7 strain bred for mammary tumors because Brighton ordered them and they're here."
With his pencil, Charles began to make a flow diagram of the project. While he wrote, he spoke, explaining to Ellen
each step, particularly how they would increase the dosage of the drug and how they would expand the study to include rats and rabbits as soon as they got some preliminary data from

the mice. Because the monkeys were so expensive they would not be used until the very end when the information from the other animals could be extrapolated and applied to a statistically significant group. Then, assuming positive

results, a method of randomization would be worked out with each species to ensure suitable controls. These fresh animals would then be treated with the optimum dosage level of Canceran determined from the first part of the study. This portion of the project would be carried out so that neither Charles nor Ellen would know which animals had been treated until after each had been sacrificed and studied and



"I think it's more up to you," said Ellen. She was sitting on a high stool with her back against the slate-topped workbench. She was wearing a white laboratory coat which was unbuttoned, revealing a beige sweater and a single strand of small, natural pearls. Her soft hands were folded together and lay still

in her lap.
"Did you mean what you said about working nights?" asked Charles. In his mind he tried to estimate the feasibility of continuing the work on the mysterious blocking factor while they labored with Canceran. It would be possible, although they'd have to put in long hours and slow down considerably. But even if they were able to isolate a single protein in a single animal which functioned as a blocking agent, they'd have something. Even if only one mouse became immunized to its tumor, it would be spectacular. Charles was well aware that success with a single case was hardly a reason to generalize, but he felt that a single cure would provide the basis for convincing the institute to back his work.
"Look," said Ellen. "I know how much this work of yours  means to you, and I know you think you're close to some sort of a conclusion. I don't know whether it's going to be positive or negative in the final analysis but that doesn't matter. You need to know. And you will. You're the most stubborn person I ever met."
Charles examined Ellen's face. What did she mean, stubborn? He didn't know whether it was a compliment or an insult, and he had no idea how the conversation had switched to his personality. But Ellen's expression was neutral, her unfathomable eyes unwavering.
Noticing Charles's stare, Ellen smiled, then said: "Don't look so surprised. If you're willing to work nights, so am I. In fact, I can bring in some things to eat on the days we work evenings so we can have supper right here."
"I'm not sure you realize how tough it will be," said

Charles. "We'd be practically living here."
"The lab is bigger than my apartment," said Ellen with a laugh, "and my cats take care of themselves."
Charles turned his gaze back to his recently concocted
flow diagram. But he wasn't thinking about Canceran. He was wrestling with the advisability of working evenings with Ellen. "You understand that I have no idea whether I can get Morrison to pay you overtime?" he said.
"I don't" began Ellen, but she didn't finish. The phone interrupted them.
"You answer it," said Charles. "I don't want to talk with anyone."
Ellen slid off her stool and, leaning on Charles's
shoulder, reached across his desk for the receiver. Her hand rested on Charles as she said hello, but it was quickly removed. Abruptly she dumped the receiver in his lap and walked away. "It's your wife."
Charles fumbled for the phone as it slid between his legs, retrieving it by pulling on the coiled cord. Of all
the times for Cathryn to be calling, he thought.  "What is it?" he asked impatiently.







Ellen. When she shook her head, Morrison withdrew a cigarette. "May I smoke in here?" he asked.
Ellen shrugged. Charles didn't allow it but not because of danger. He just hated the smell. Ellen felt a stab of rebellious joy as she tacitly acquiesced.
Morrison produced a gold lighter that matched his cigarette case from his vest pocket and made an elaborate ritual out of lighting his cigarette. It was a staged gesture, designed to keep Ellen waiting.
"I suppose you know what has happened today concerning the Brighton case," said Morrison at length.
"A little bit," agreed Ellen.
"And you know that Charles has been selected to continue the Canceran study?"
Ellen nodded.
Morrison paused and blew smoke out in successive rings.  "It's extremely important for the institute that this study be concluded successfully."



had been a warm and tender night, but as usual Charles had not stayed over. He'd said he had to be home when the children woke up. The next day at work he

had behaved as he always did, but they never went out again and Charles never offered a word of explanation. Then he'd married the temporary typist. It seemed like one day Ellen heard he'd been seeing this girl, and the next he was marrying her. Ellen agreed that impulsive was a good description of Charles; impulsive and stubborn.

"What do you want me to say?" said Ellen, struggling to bring her mind to the present.

"I guess I want you to reassure me," said Morrison.

"Well," said Ellen. "I agree that Charles is

temperamental, but I don't think it will influence his work. I think you can count on him to do the Canceran study."

Morrison relaxed and smiled, his small teeth visible

behind thin lips. "Thank you, Miss Sheldon. That's exactly what I wanted to hear." Reaching into the sink, he ran water on his half-smoked cigarette and dropped it into the wastebasket. "One other thing. I was wondering if you would do me and the institute a big favor. I'd like you to report any abnormal behavior on Charles's part in relation to the Canceran project. I know this is an awkward request, but the entire board of directors will be grateful for your cooperation."

"All right," said Ellen quickly, not sure how she really felt about it. At the same time she thought that Charles deserved it. She'd put forth a lot of effort for the man and he'd not appreciated it. "I'll do it with the proviso that anything I say remains anonymous."

"Absolutely," agreed Morrison. "That goes without saying. And, of course, you will report to me directly."



concentrate on the road. As soon as he could, he turned right off Massachusetts Avenue and skirted the Back Bay Fens, a neglected and trash-littered park in the center of what once was an attractive residential neighborhood. He passed the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and then the Gardner Museum. As

the traffic cleared, his mind wandered. To Charles it seemed emotionally cruel of Cathryn to leave him dangling, a victim of his own imagination. Could Michelle's nosebleed have started again? No, that seemed too simple. Maybe they needed to do some test like an IVP and Cathryn didn't want to give permission. No, there would be no reason why she wouldn't explain that over the phone. It had to be some medical problem. Maybe appendicitis. Charles remembered the abdominal tenderness, the low-grade fever. Maybe it was a subacute appendicitis and they wanted to operate. And Charles knew how hospitals affected Cathryn. They made her crazy.

Entering Dr. Jordan Wiley's office, Charles was engulfed

by a sea of anxious mothers and crying children. The crowded waiting room . . . that was a part of private practice that Charles did not miss. Like all doctors, his secretaries had an irritating propensity to book new, full workups in time slots reserved for simple return visits, resulting in a hopeless backup of patients. No matter what Charles had said, it had made no difference. He had always been behind in the office and had always been apologizing to the patients.

Charles searched for Cathryn in the press of women and children, but he didn't see her. He worked his way over to the nurse who was being besieged by a covey of mothers demanding to know exactly when they would be seen. Charles

tried to interrupt but soon realized he had to wait his turn. Eventually he got the woman's attention and was impressed by her composure. If she was affected by the chaos around her, she did a superb job of not showing it.

"I'm looking for my wife," said Charles. He had to speak loudly to make himself heard.

"What's the name?" asked the nurse, her hands folded over a pile of charts.

"Martel. Cathryn Martel."

"Just a moment." As she rolled back in her chair and got to her feet, her face became serious. The women grouped around the desk eyed Charles with a mixture of respect and vexation. They were clearly jealous of the rapid response he'd elicited.
The nurse returned almost immediately, followed by a woman of impressive dimensions who Charles thought would make an appropriate mate for the Michelin tire man. He noticed her name tag: Miss A. Hammersmith. She motioned to Charles, and he obediently stepped around the desk.
"Please follow me," said the nurse. Her mouth, suspended between two puckered cheeks, was the only part of her face that moved as she spoke.
Charles did as he was told, finding himself hurrying down a hall behind the bulk of Miss Hammersmith who effectively blocked his view. They passed a series of what Charles imagined were examining rooms. At the end of the hall she opened a paneled door and moved aside for Charles to enter.
"Excuse me," said Charles, squeezing past her.
"I guess we both could lose a few pounds," said Miss Hammersmith.

As Charles stepped into the room, Miss Hammersmith

remained in the hall and softly closed the door behind him. Bookshelves lined one wall, filled with stacks of medical periodicals and some textbooks. In the center of the room was a round, blond oak table surrounded by a half dozen captain's chairs. One of them abruptly scraped back as Cathryn stood

up. She was breathing audibly; Charles could hear the air enter and exit from her nose. It wasn't a smooth sound. It trembled.

"What . . ." began Charles.

Cathryn ran to him before he could speak and threw her

arms around his neck. Charles put his hands on her waist and let her hold him for a few moments to regain her equilibrium.

"Cathryn," he said at last, beginning to experience the bitter taste of fear. Cathryn's behavior was undermining his thought of appendicitis, of an operation, of something ordinary.

A horrid, unwelcome memory forced itself into Charles's mind: the day he'd learned of Elizabeth's lymphoma.

"Cathryn," he said more sharply. "Cathryn! What is going on? What's the matter with you?"

"It's my fault," said Cathryn. As soon as she spoke she started to cry. Charles could feel her body shudder with the force of her tears. He waited, his eyes moving around the room, noticing the picture of Hippocrates on the wall opposite the bookshelves, the rich parquet floor, the Nelson's textbook of pediatrics on the table.

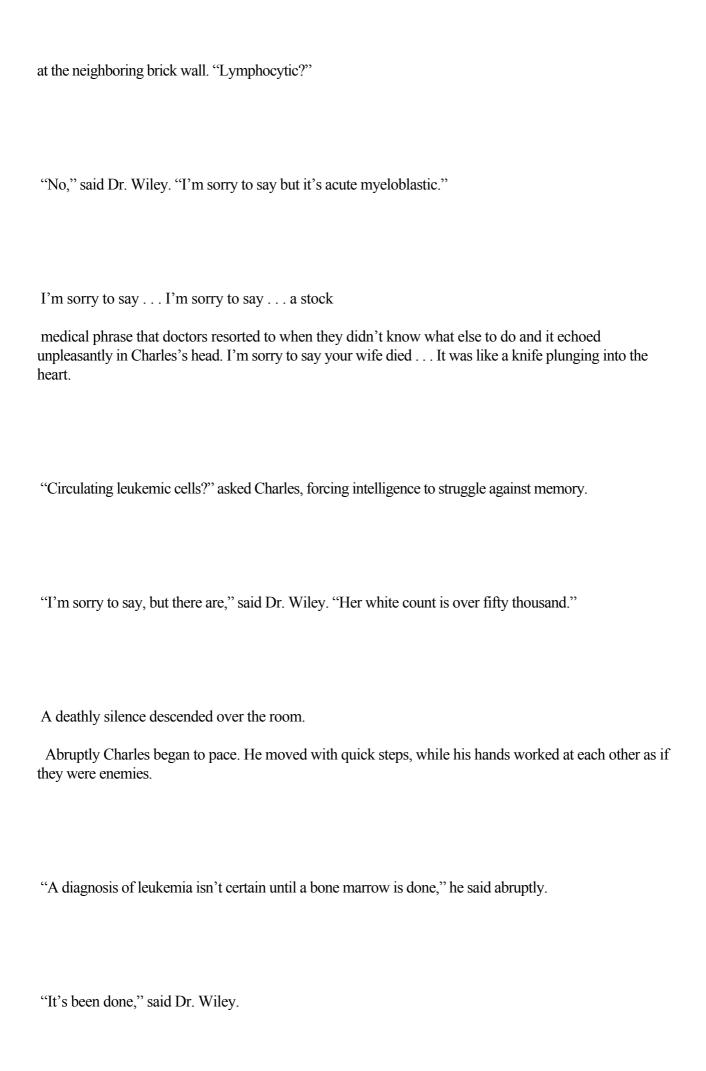
"Cathryn," said Charles at length. "Please tell me what's going on. What's your fault?"



"It's good to see you again, Charles," said Dr. Wiley, grasping Charles's hand. "I'm sorry it's under such trying circumstances."
"Perhaps you could tell me what these trying circumstances are," said Charles, allowing annoyance to camouflage his fear.
"You haven't been told?" asked Dr. Wiley. Cathryn shook her head.
"Maybe I should step outside for a few moments," said Dr. Wiley.
He started to turn toward the door, but Charles restrained him with a hand on his forearm. "I think you should tell me what this is all about," he said.
Dr. Wiley glanced at Cathryn, who nodded agreement. She was no longer sobbing but she knew she'd have difficulty speaking.
"All right," said Dr. Wiley, facing Charles once again.
"It's about Michelle."









conference room door opened a cacophony of crying babies could be heard. Cathryn, initially unsure of what to do, hurried after the men.

At the opposite end of the corridor they entered a narrow room which served as a small clinical lab. There was just

enough space for a counter and a row of high stools. Racks of urine samples gave the room a slightly fishy aroma. A pimply faced girl in a soiled white coat deferentially slid off the nearest stool. She'd been busy doing the routine urinalysis.

"Over here, Charles," said Dr. Wiley, motioning to a

shrouded microscope. He plucked off the plastic cover. It was a binocular Zeiss. Charles sat down, adjusted the eyepieces, and snapped on the light. Dr. Wiley opened up a nearby drawer and pulled out a cardboard slide holder. Gently he lifted one of the slides out, being careful to touch only the edges. As he extended it toward Charles, their eyes met. To Dr. Wiley, Charles looked like a cornered animal.

Using his left hand, Charles took the slide between his thumb and first finger. In the center of the slide was a cover glass over what appeared to be an innocuous smudge. On the ground glass portion of the slide was written: MICHELLE MAR- TEL #882673 BONE MARROW. Charles's hand trembled as he placed the slide on the mechanical stage and put a drop of

oil on the cover glass. Watching from the side he lowered the oil immersion lens until it just touched the slide and

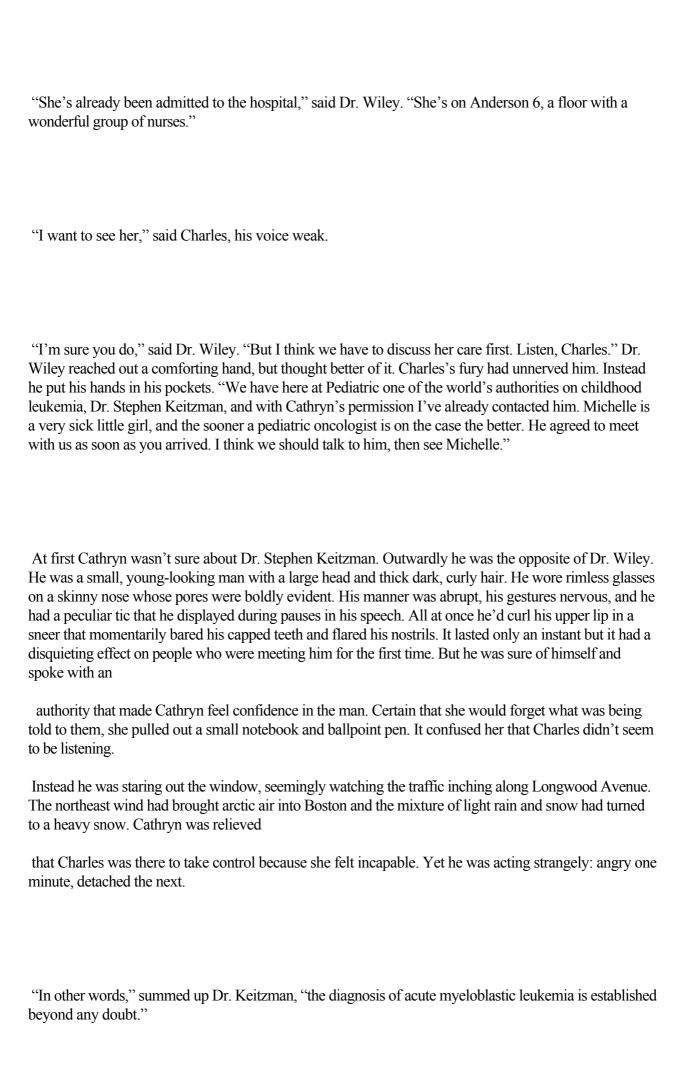
entered the oil.

Taking a deep breath, Charles put his eyes to the oculars and tensely began to raise the barrel of the scope. All at once a multitude of pale blue cells leaped out of the blur,

choking off his breath, and forcing the blood to pound in his temples. A shiver of fear as real as if he were looking at

his own death warrant blew through his soul. Instead of the usual population of cells in all stages of maturation, Michelle's marrow had been all but replaced by large, undifferentiated cells with correspondingly large irregular nuclei, containing multiple nucleoli. He was gripped by a sense of utter panic.

"I think you'll agree it's rather conclusive," said Dr. Wiley gently.
With a crash, Charles leaped to his feet, knocking his stool over backwards. An uncontrollable anger, anger pent up from the exasperating morning and now fired by Michelle's illness, blinded him. "Why?" he screamed at Dr. Wiley, as if the pediatrician were part of an encircling conspiracy. He grabbed a fistful of the man's shirt and shook him violently.
Cathryn leaped between the two men, throwing her arms around her husband. "Charles, stop!" she shouted, terrified of alienating the one person she knew they needed to help them. "It's not Dr. Wiley's fault. If anyone's to blame, it's us."
As if waking from a dream, Charles embarrassingly let go of Dr. Wiley's shirt, leaving the surprised pediatrician's bow tie at an acute angle. He bent down and righted the stool, then stood back up, covering his face with his hands.
"Blame is not the issue," said Dr. Wiley, fumbling nervously with his tie. "Caring for the child is the issue."
"Where is Michelle?" asked Charles. Cathryn did not let go of his arm.



Swinging his head around, Charles surveyed the room. He knew that he had a precarious hold on his emotions, and it

made it difficult to concentrate on what Keitzman had to say. Angrily he felt he'd spent the whole morning watching people undermine his security, dislocate his life, destroy his family, rob him of his newly found happiness. Rationally he knew there was a big difference between Morrison and Ibanez on the one hand and Wiley and Keitzman on the other, but at the moment they all triggered the same unreasoning fury. Charles had great difficulty believing that Michelle had leukemia, particularly the worst possible type, the most deadly kind. He had already been through that kind of disaster; it was someone else's turn.

Listening half-heartedly, Charles examined Dr. Stephen Keitzman, who had assumed that typical condescending air of the physician in charge, doling out bits and pieces of information as if he were lecturing. Obviously Keitzman had experienced this scene many times before and his stock phrases like "I'm sorry to say" had an overused, insincere ring. Charles had the uncomfortable feeling that the man was enjoying himself, not in the same manner he'd enjoy a movie or a good meal, but in a more subtle, self-satisfied way: he was the center of attention in a crisis. This attitude abraded Charles's already frayed emotions, especially since he was more than familiar with the general material Dr. Keitzman was covering. Charles forced himself to remain

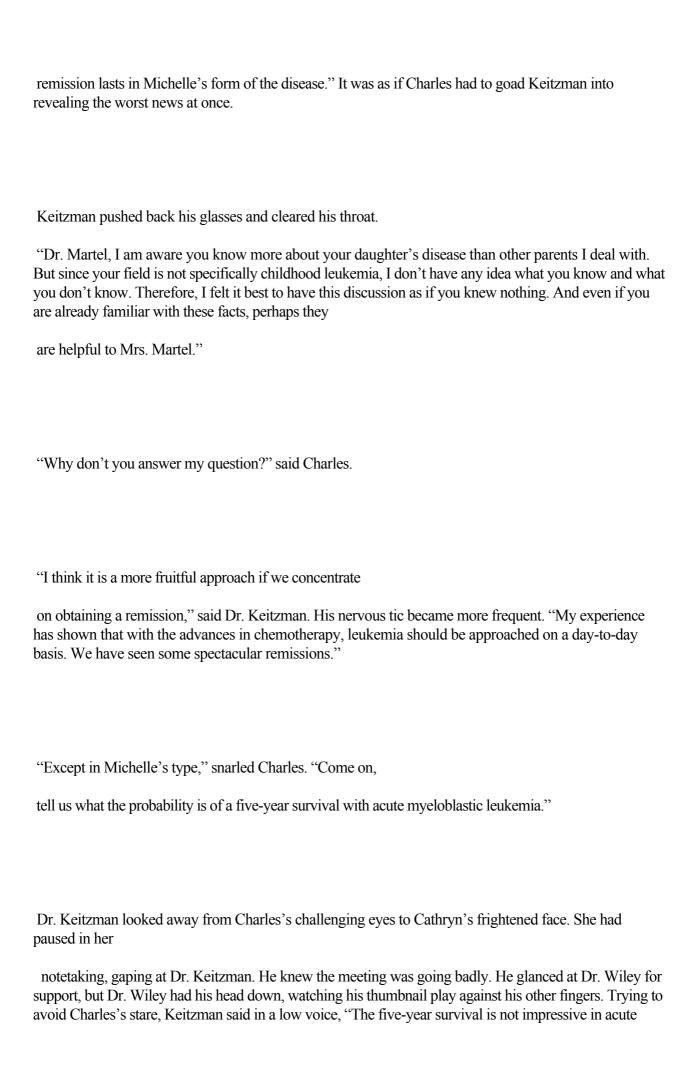
silent while his mind's eye conjured up kaleidoscopic images of Michelle as she grew up.

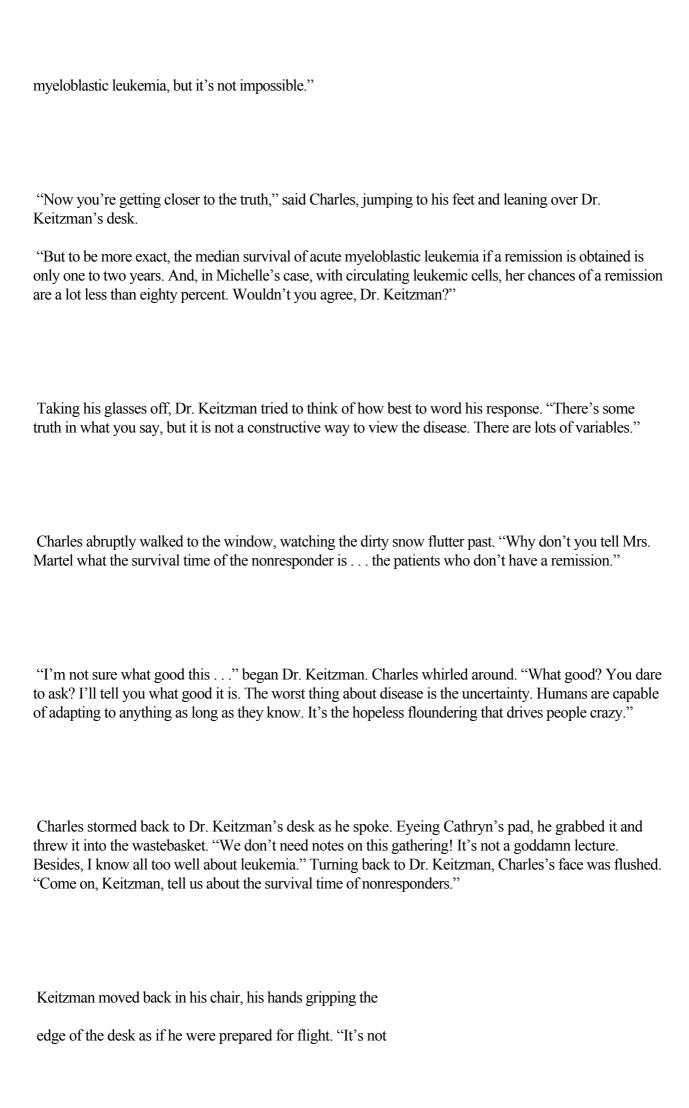
"In order to allay the inevitable sense of guilt,"

continued Keitzman as he bared his upper teeth in one of his nervous grimaces, "I want to emphasize that the cause and

date of onset of leukemia like Michelle's is unknown. Parents should not try to blame specific events for initiating the disease. The goal will be to treat the condition and bring about a remission. I'm pleased to be able to report that we have very favorable results with acute myeloblastic leukemia; something we didn't have ten years ago. Now we are able to engineer a remission in about eighty percent of cases."

"That's wonderful," said Charles, speaking for the first time. "But unlike the five-year cures you've been achieving with other forms of leukemia, can you tell us how long the









"Well," said Dr. Keitzman, "I believe in aggressively treating all cases, whatever the chances are for remission. Every patient deserves a chance at life, whatever the cost. Every day, every month, is precious."
"Even if the patient would rather end her suffering," said Charles, recalling Elizabeth's last days. "When the chances of a remission—let alone a cure—are less than twenty percent, I don't know if it's worth subjecting a child to the additional pain."
Dr. Keitzman stood up abruptly, pushing back his chair.  "We obviously view the value of life very differently. I believe chemotherapy to be a truly remarkable weapon against cancer. But you are entitled to your opinion. However, it seems evident that you would prefer to find another oncologist or handle your daughter's therapy yourself. Good luck!"
"No!" said Cathryn, leaping to her feet, terrified at the prospect of being abandoned by Dr. Keitzman, who Dr. Wiley had said was the best. "Dr. Keitzman, we need you. Michelle needs you."
"I don't think your husband shares your view, Mrs. Martel," said Dr. Keitzman.
"He does," said Cathryn. "He's just distraught. Please,  Dr. Keitzman." Turning to Charles, Cathryn put a hand on his neck. "Charles, please! We can't fight this alone. You said  this morning you weren't a pediatrician. We need Dr. Keitzman and Dr. Wiley."

"I think you should cooperate," urged Dr. Wiley.
Charles sagged under the weight of his brooding impotence. He knew he could not care for Michelle even if he were convinced the current approach for her particular disease to be wrong. He had nothing to offer and his mind was overloaded, an emotional jumble.
"Charles, please?" Cathryn pleaded.
"Michelle is a sick little girl," said Dr. Wiley.
"All right," said Charles softly, once again forced to surrender.
Cathryn looked at Dr. Keitzman. "There! He said all right."
"Dr. Martel," asked Dr. Keitzman. "Do you want me to serve as the oncologist on this case?"
With a sigh which suggested breathing to be a great effort, Charles reluctantly nodded his head.

Dr. Keitzman sat down and rearranged some papers on his desk. "All right," he said at length. "Our protocol for myeloblastic leukemia involves these drugs: Daunorubicin, Thioguanine, and Cytarabine. After our workup we'll start immediately with 60 mg/m2 of Daunorubicin given IV by rapid infusion."
As Dr. Keitzman outlined the treatment schedule, Charles's mind tortured him by recalling the potential side effects of the Daunorubicin. Michelle's fever was probably caused by an infection due to her body's depressed ability to fight bacteria. The Daunorubicin would make that worse. And besides making her essentially defenseless for a host of bacteria and fungi, the drug would also devastate her digestive system and possibly her heart besides that her hair God!  "I want to see Michelle," he said suddenly, leaping to his feet, trying to stifle his thoughts. Immediately he became aware that he had interrupted Dr. Keitzman in mid-sentence. Everyone was staring at him as if he had done something outrageous.
"Charles, I think you should listen," said Dr. Wiley, reaching up and grasping Charles's arm. It had been a reflexive gesture and only after he'd made contact did Dr.  Wiley question its advisability. But Charles didn't react. In fact his arm felt limp and after the slightest tug, he sat back down.
"As I was saying," continued Dr. Keitzman, "I believe it is important to tailor the psychological approach to the patient. I tend to work by age: under five; school age; and adolescents. Under five it's simple; constant and loving supportive therapy. Problems start in the school-age group where the fear of separation from parents and the pain of hospital procedures are the major concerns of the child."
Charles squirmed in his seat. He didn't want to try to think of the problem from Michelle's point of view; it was too painful.
Dr. Keitzman's teeth flashed as his face momentarily contorted, then he continued, "With the school-age

child, the patient is told no more than he specifically asks to know.
The psychological support is focused on relieving the child's anxieties about separation."
"I think Michelle is going to feel the separation aspect a lot," said Cathryn, struggling to follow Dr. Keitzman's explanation, wanting to cooperate to please the man.
"With adolescents," said Dr. Keitzman without acknowledging Cathryn, "treatment approaches that of an
adult. Psychological support is geared to eliminate confusion and uncertainty without destroying denial if that is part of the patient's defense mechanism. In Michelle's situation, unfortunately, the problem falls between the school age and the adolescent. I'm not sure what is the best way to handle it. Perhaps you people as parents might have an opinion."
"Are you talking about whether Michelle should be told she has leukemia?" asked Cathryn.
"That's part of it," agreed Dr. Keitzman.
Cathryn looked at Charles, but he had his eyes closed again. Dr. Wiley returned her gaze with a sympathetic
expression that made Cathryn feel a modicum of reassurance.
"Well," said Dr. Keitzman, "it is an issue that demands thought. No decision has to be made now. For the time being, Michelle can be told that we are trying to figure out what's wrong with her. Before we go, does Michelle have any siblings?"

"Yes," said Cathryn. "Two brothers."
"Good," said Dr. Keitzman. "They should be typed to see if they match Michelle's HLA and ABO loci. We're probably going to need platelets, granulocytes, and maybe even marrow, so I hope one of them matches."
Cathryn looked at Charles for support but his eyes were still closed. She had no idea what Dr. Keitzman was talking about but she assumed Charles did. But Charles seemed to be having more trouble than she was with the news.
On the way up in the elevator, Charles fought to control himself. He'd never before experienced such painfully conflicting emotions. On the one hand he could not wait to see his daughter, to hold her and protect her; on the other  the dreaded seeing her because he was going to have to come to terms with her diagnosis. And in that sense he knew too much. She would see it in his face.
The elevator stopped. The doors opened. Ahead stretched a pale blue hall with pictures of animals affixed like decals directly on the paint. It was busy with pajama-clad children of a variety of ages, nurses, parents, even hospital  maintenance men grouped about a stepladder fixing the lights. Dr. Wiley led them down the hall, skirting the ladder and passing the busy nurses' station. The charge nurse, seeing  Dr. Wiley from behind the chart racks, scurried out and  caught up with them. Charles glanced down at the floor and watched his feet. It was as if he were ooking at someone else. Cathryn was beside him with her arm thrust under his.

Michelle had a single room, painted the same shade of



"I feel fine now," said Michelle, obviously overjoyed to see her parents. But then her face clouded and

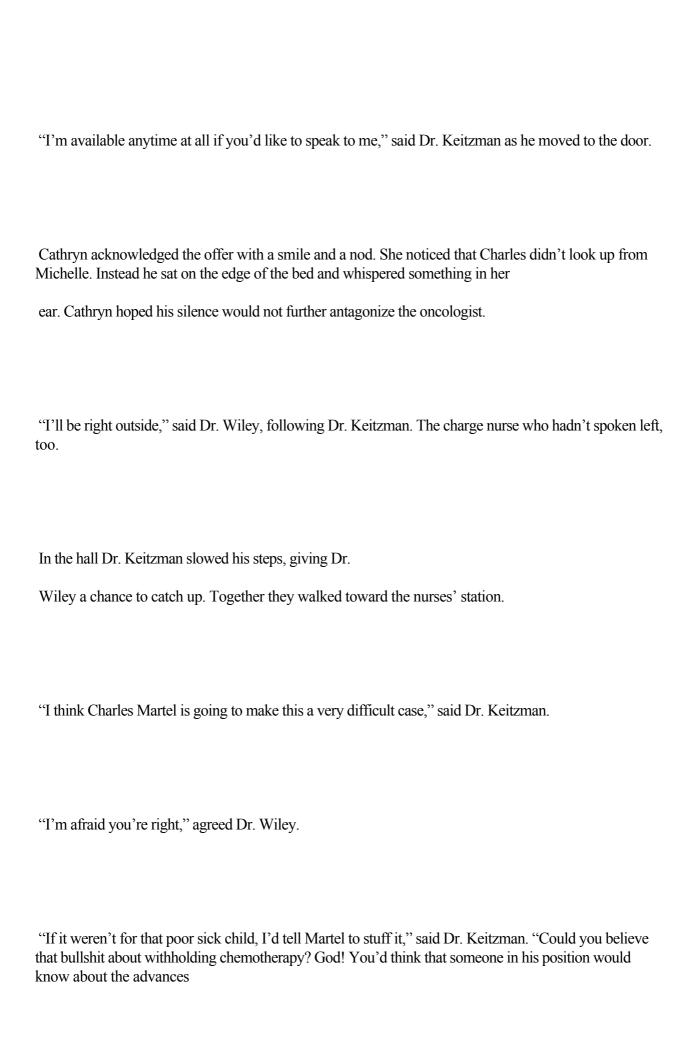
turning to Charles, she asked: "Is it true, Daddy?"

Charles's heart leaped in his chest. She knows, he thought with alarm. He glanced at Dr. Keitzman and tried to remember what he had said about the proper psychological approach.
"Is what true?" asked Dr. Wiley casually, coming to the foot of the bed.  "Daddy?" pleaded Michelle. "Is it true I have to stay overnight?"
Charles blinked, at first unwilling to believe that
Michelle wasn't asking him to confirm the diagnosis. Then when he was sure she didn't know she had leukemia, he smiled with relief. "Just for a few nights," he said.
"But I don't want to miss school," said Michelle.
"Don't you worry about school," said Charles with a
nervous laugh. He eyed Cathryn for a moment who also laughed in the same hollow fashion. "It's important that you stay here for some tests so that we can find out what's causing your fever."
"I don't want any more tests," said Michelle, her eyes widening in fright. She'd had enough pain.
Charles was struck by how tiny her body was in the
hospital bed. Her narrow arms looked incredibly frail as they poked out of the sleeves of the hospital gown. Her neck,

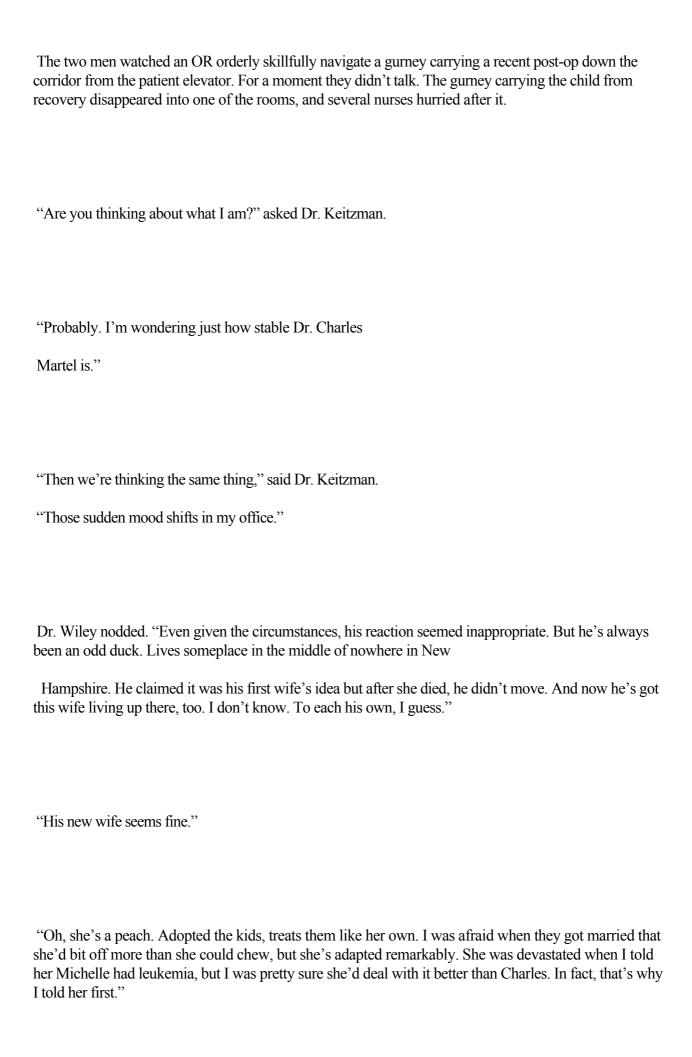
which had always seemed substantial, now looked about the size of his forearm; she had the appearance of a delicate and vulnerable bird. Charles knew that somewhere in the heart of her bone marrow was a group of her own cells waging war against her body. And there was nothing he could do to help her—absolutely nothing. "Dr. Wiley and Dr. Keitzman will only do the tests they absolutely need," said Cathryn, stroking Michelle's hair. "You're going to have to be a big girl." Cathryn's comment awakened a sense of protectiveness in Charles. He recognized he couldn't do anything for Michelle, but at least he could protect her from unnecessary trauma. He knew too well that patients with rare diseases were often subjected to all sorts of physical harassment at the whim of the attending physician. With his right hand, Charles twisted the soft plastic bottle so he could see the label. Platelets. With his hand still holding the bottle, he turned to Dr. Wiley. "We felt she needed platelets immediately," said Dr. Wiley. "Hers were only about twenty thousand." Charles nodded. "Well, I've got to be going," said Dr. Keitzman. Grasping one of Michelle's feet through the covers he said, "I'll be

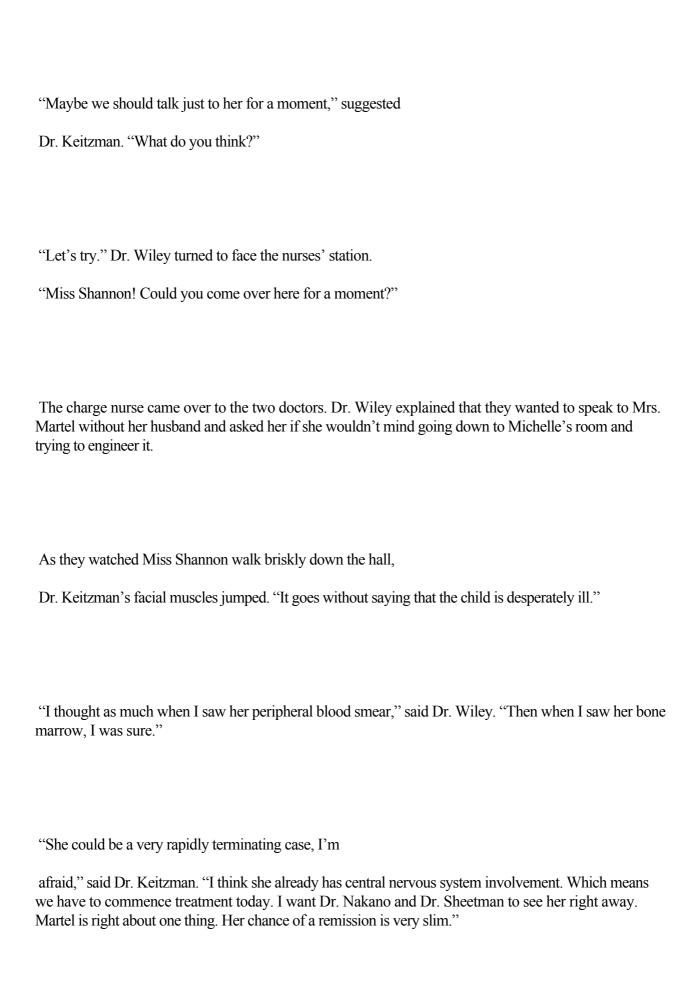
seeing you later, Miss Martel. Also there will be a few other doctors coming in to talk to you sometime today. We'll be giving you some medicine in that tube, so keep your arm nice and still."

Charles peered at the plastic tube: Daunorubicin! A fresh wave of fear washed over him, accompanied by a new urge to reach down and snatch his beloved daughter from the clutches of the hospital. An irrational thought passed through his mind: maybe the whole nightmare would disappear if he got Michelle away from all these people.



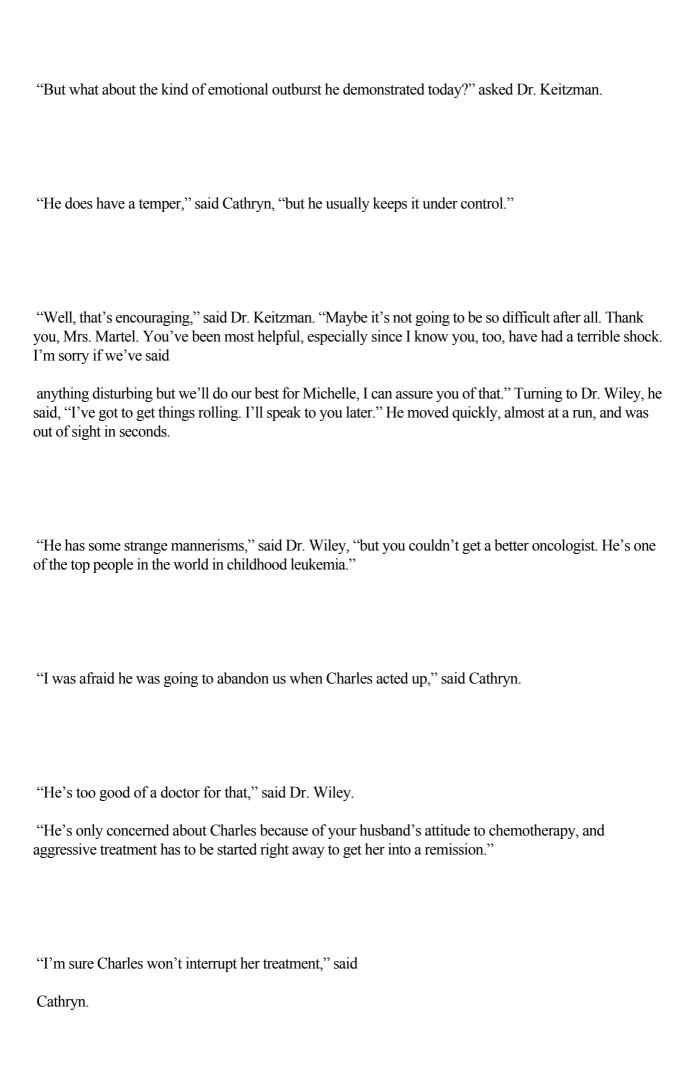
we've made with chemotherapy, especially in lymphocytic leukemia and Hodgkin's."
"He knows," said Dr. Wiley. "He's just angry. It's understandable, particularly when you know he's been through all this when his wife died."
"I still resent his behavior. He is a physician."
"But he's in pure research," said Dr. Wiley. "He's been away from clinical medicine for almost ten years. It's a good argument for researchers to keep one foot
in clinical medicine to keep their sense of perspective alive. After all, taking care of people is what it's all about."
They reached the nurses' station, and both men leaned on the counter surveying the busy scene about them with unseeing eyes.
"Charles's anger did scare me for a moment," admitted Dr. Wiley. "I thought he'd totally lost control."
"He wasn't much better in my office," said Dr. Keitzman, shaking his head. "I've dealt with anger before, as I'm sure you have, but not like this. People get angry at fate, not the diagnosing physicians."

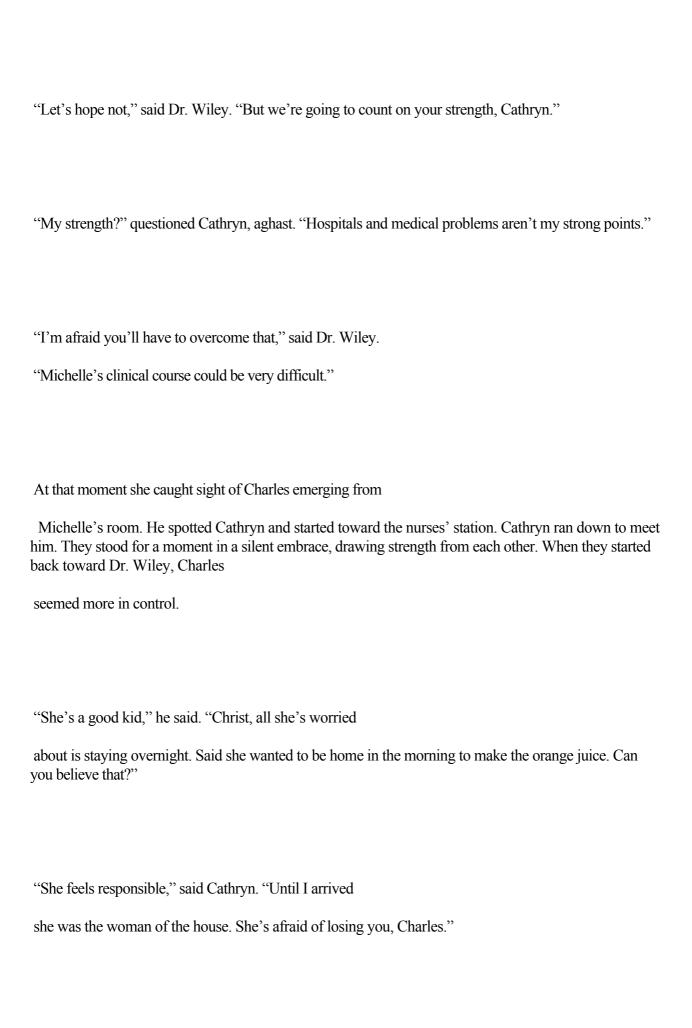






remission regardless of the side effects."
Cathryn examined the narrow, hawklike features of Dr. Keitzman and the broad, rounded face of Dr. Wiley. They were outwardly so different yet similar in their intensity. "I don't know what you want me to say."
"We'd just like you to give us some idea of his emotional state," said Dr. Keitzman. "We'd like to have some idea of what to expect."
"I think he will be fine," assured Cathryn. "He had a lot of trouble adjusting when his first wife died, but he never interfered with her treatment."
"Does he often lose his temper as he did today?" asked Keitzman.
"He's had an awful shock," said Cathryn. "I think it's understandable. Besides, ever since his first wife died, cancer research has been his passion."
"It's a terrible irony," agreed Dr. Wiley.





"It's amazing what you don't know about your own
children," said Charles. "I asked her if she minded if I went back to the lab. She said no, as long as you stayed here, Cathryn."
Cathryn was touched. "On the way to the hospital we had a little talk, and for the first time I felt she really accepted me."
"She's lucky to have you," said Charles. "And so am I. I
hope you don't mind my leaving you here. I hope you understand. I feel such a terrible powerlessness. I've got to do something."
"I understand," said Cathryn. "I think you're right. There isn't anything you can do right now and it would be better if you can get your mind on something else. I'll be happy to stay. In fact, I'll call my mother. She'll come over and take care of things."
Dr. Wiley watched the couple come toward him, pleased to see their open affection and mutual support The fact that
they were acknowledging and sharing their grief was healthy; it was a good sign and it encouraged him. He smiled, somewhat at a loss for what to say as they arrived. He had to get back to his office which he knew was in chaos, but he wanted to be there if they still needed him.
"Do you have any extra of Michelle's blood?" asked
Charles. His voice was businesslike, matter-of-fact.

"Probably," said Dr. Wiley. It wasn't a question he had expected. Charles had the uncanny ability to



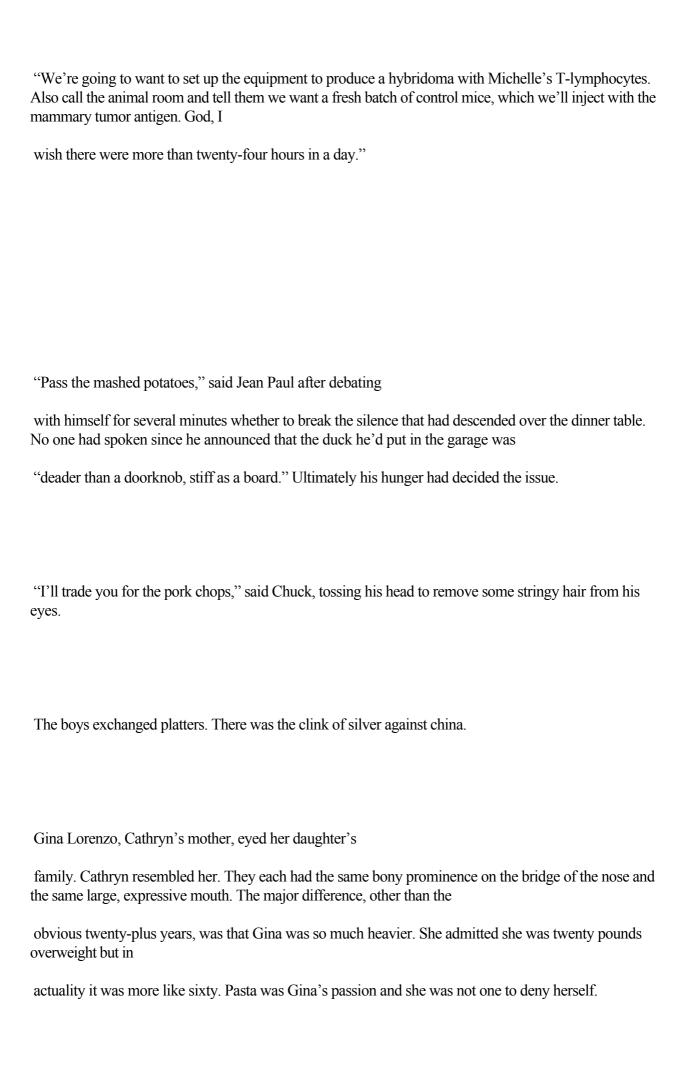
"Thanks for coming back," taunted Ellen. "I could have used some help injecting the mice with the Canceran."
Charles ignored her, carrying the vial of Michelle's blood over to the apparatus they used to separate the cellular components of blood. He began the complicated process of priming the unit.
Bending down to peer at Charles beneath the glassware shelving, Ellen watched for a moment. "Hey," she called. "I said I could have used some help "
Charles switched on a circulatory pump.
Wiping her hands, Ellen came around the end of the workbench, curious to see the object of Charles's obvious  intense concentration. "I finished injecting the first batch of mice," she repeated when she was close
enough to be absolutely certain Charles could hear her.  "Wonderful," said Charles without interest. Carefully he introduced an aliquot of Michelle's blood into
the machine. Then he switched on the compressor.
"What are you doing?" Ellen followed all his movements.

"Michelle has myeloblastic leukemia," said Charles. He spoke evenly, like he was giving the weather report.
"Oh, no!" gasped Ellen. "Charles, I'm so sorry." She wanted to reach out and comfort him but she restrained herself.
"Amazing, isn't it?" laughed Charles. "If the day's
disasters had remained localized to the problems here at the Weinburger, I'd probably just cry. But with Michelle's illness, everything is a bit overwhelming. Christ!"
Charles's laughter had a hollow ring to it but it struck
Ellen as somewhat inappropriate.
"Are you all right?" asked Ellen.
"Wonderful," said Charles as he opened their small refrigerator for clinical reagents.
"How does Michelle feel?"

	good right now but she has no idea of what she's in for. I'm afraid it's going to be bad."
Ellen f	ound herself at a loss for words. She blankly
watche you doi	d Charles as he went about completing his test. Finally she found her tongue. "Charles, what are ng?"
	e some of Michelle's blood. I'm going to see if our method of isolating a cancer antigen works on temic cells. It gives me the mistaken impression I'm doing something to help her."
his vulr powerl	Charles," said Ellen sympathetically. There was something pitiful about the way he acknowledged terability. Ellen knew how much of an activist he was and Charles had told her the feeling of essness was what had been the hardest for him when Elizabeth was ill. He had been forced to just watch her die. And now Michelle!
	ecided we aren't going to stop our own work," said Charles. "We'll continue while we work on an. Work nights if we have to."
came b	Morrison is very insistent about exclusively concentrating on Canceran," said Ellen. "In fact, he y while you were out to emphasize that." For a moment Ellen debated about telling Charles the son Morrison stopped by, but with everything else that had happened, she was afraid to.
than a r	dn't care less what Morrison says. With Michelle's illness, cancer has, once again, become more netaphysical concept for me. Our work has so much more promise than developing another herapeutic agent.
Beside be happ	s, Morrison doesn't even have to know what we're doing. We'll do the Canceran work and he'll

"I'm not sure you realize how much the administration is counting on Canceran," said Ellen. "I really don't think it's advisable to go against them on this, particularly when the reason is personal."
For a moment Charles froze, then he exploded. He slammed his open palm against the slate countertop with such force that several beakers tumbled off the overhead shelves.  "That's enough," he yelled to punctuate his blow. "I've had enough of people telling me what to do. If you don't want to work with me, then just get the fuck out of here!"
Abruptly Charles turned back to his work, running a nervous hand through his disheveled hair. For a few moments he worked in silence, then without turning he said, "Don't just stand there; get me the radioactive labeled nucleotides."
Ellen walked over to the radioactive storage area. As she opened the lock, she noticed that her hands were trembling. Obviously Charles was just barely in control of himself. She wondered what she was going to say to Dr. Morrison. She was certain she wanted to say something, because as her fear abated her anger grew. There was no excuse for Charles to treat her as he did. She wasn't a servant.
She brought the chemicals over and arrayed them on the counter.
"Thank you," he said simply, as if nothing had happened.  "As soon as we have some B-lymphocytes I want to incubate them with the tagged nucleotides and some of the leukemic cells."

Ellen nodded. She couldn't keep pace with such rapid emotional changes.
"While I was driving over here, I had an inspiration," continued Charles. "The biggest hurdle in our work has been this blocking factor and our inability to elicit an antibody response to the cancer antigen in the cancerous animal. Well, I have an idea; I was trying to think of ways of saving time. Why not inject the cancer antigen into a related,  noncancerous animal where we can be absolutely certain of an antibody response? What do you think about that?"
Ellen scrutinized Charles's face. Within seconds he'd metamorphosed from an infuriated child to the dedicated researcher. Ellen guessed that it was his way of dealing with the tragedy of Michelle.
Without waiting for an answer, Charles went on: "As soon as the noncancerous animal is immune to the cancer antigen, we'll isolate the responsible T-lymphocytes, purify the transfer factor protein, and transfer sensitivity to the cancerous animal. It's so fundamentally simple, I can't believe we didn't think of it before. Well what's your impression?"
Ellen shrugged. In truth she was fearful of saying anything. Although the basic premise sounded promising, Ellen knew that the mysterious transfer factor did not work well in the animal systems they were using; in fact, it worked best with humans. But technical questions were not foremost in her mind. She wondered if it would be too obvious if she excused herself and went directly up to Dr. Morrison's office.
"How about getting the polyethylene glycol?" said Charles.





Dutifully Charles took a bite of the fettucini but his stomach rebelled. He let the pasta sit in his mouth before trying to swallow it. The reality of the day's disasters had hit him with hurricane force once he'd left the frenzied environment he'd created in the lab. Work had been an emotional anesthetic and he had been sorry when it was time to pick up Chuck and drive home. And Chuck hadn't helped. Charles had waited until they were out of the Boston rush hour traffic before telling his son that his sister had a very serious kind of leukemia. Chuck's response had been a simple "Oh!" followed by silence. Then he had asked if there was any chance he might catch it.

At the time Charles did not say anything; he just gripped the steering wheel harder, marveling at the unabashed depths of his oldest son's selfishness. Not once did Chuck ask how Michelle was doing. And now as Charles watched Chuck gobble his pork chops, he felt like reaching over and throwing the selfish kid out of the house.

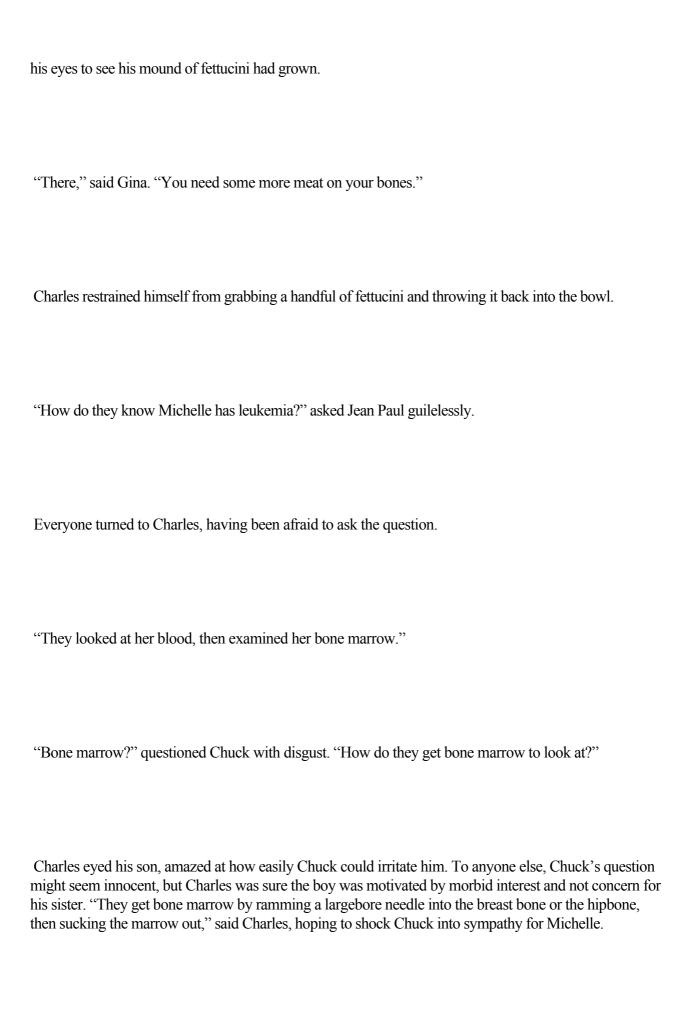
But Charles didn't move. Instead he began mechanically to chew his fettucini, embarrassed at his own thoughts. Chuck was immature. At least Jean Paul reacted appropriately. He'd cried and then asked when Michelle would be home and if he could go and see her. He was a good kid.

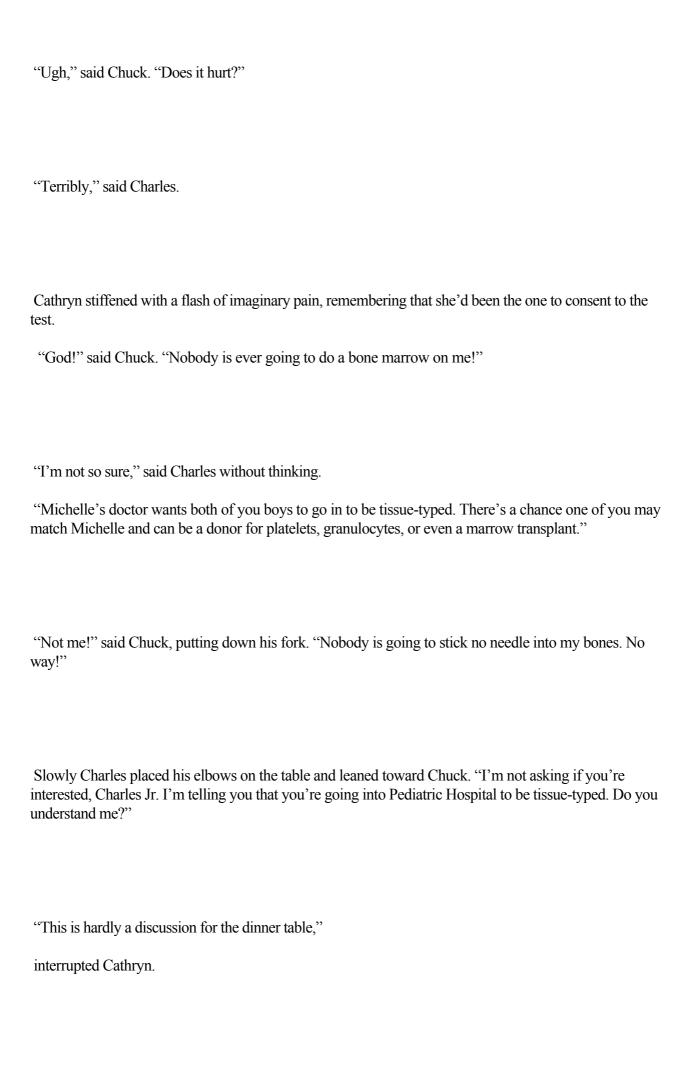
Charles looked at Cathryn, who kept her head down, pushing her food around her plate, pretending for her mother's sake to be eating. He was thankful that he had her. He didn't think he could handle Michelle's illness by himself. At the same time he realized how difficult it was for Cathryn. For that reason he had not said anything about the troubles at the institute, nor did he plan to. She had enough to worry about.

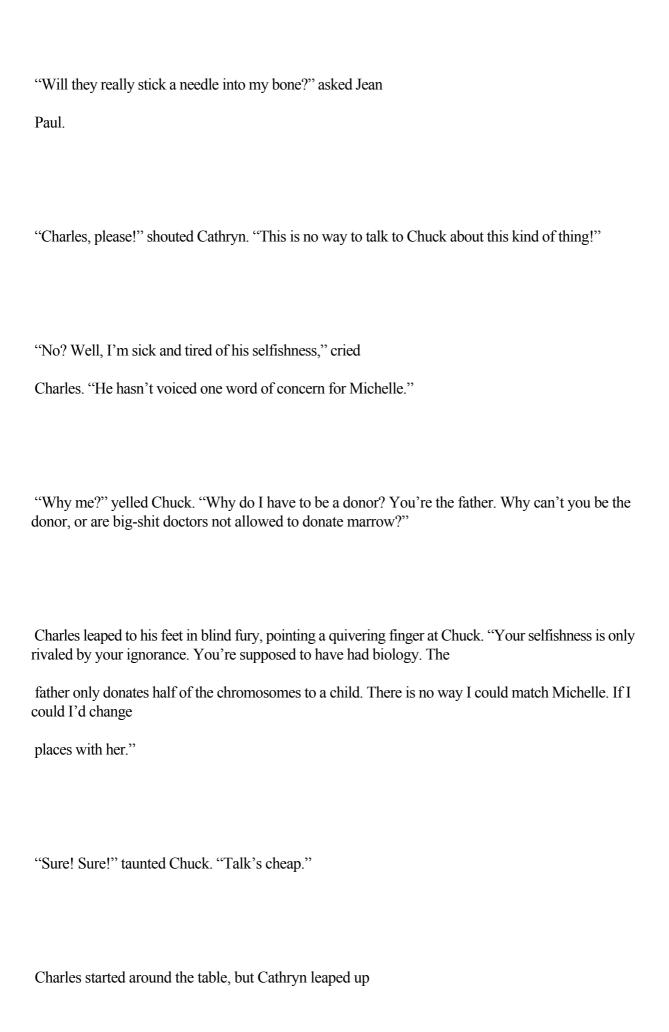
"Have some more pork chops, Charles," said Gina, reaching over and unceremoniously plopping a chop on his full plate.

He had tried to say no but the chop had already entered its ballistic arc. He looked away, trying to stay calm. Charles found Gina trying even under the best of

circumstances, especially since the woman had never concealed her disapproval of her only daughter marrying a man thirteen years her senior with three kids. Charles heard another telltale plop and opened







and caught him. "Charles, please," she said bursting into tears. "Calm down!"
Chuck was frozen in his chair, gripping the sides with
white knuckles. He knew that only Cathryn stood between him and disaster.
"In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy
Ghost," said Gina, crossing herself. "Charles! Beg the Lord for forgiveness. Don't abet the devil's work."
"Oh, Christ!" shouted Charles. "Now we get a sermon!"
"Don't tempt the Lord," said Gina with conviction.
"To hell with God," shouted Charles, breaking free of Cathryn's grip. "What kind of God gives a defenseless twelve-year-old leukemia?"
"You cannot question the Lord's way," said Gina solemnly.
"Mother!" cried Cathryn. "That's enough!"

Charles's face flushed crimson. His mouth voiced some inaudible words before he abruptly spun on his heels, wrenched open the back door, and stormed out into the night. The door slammed with a jolting finality that shook the bric-a-brac in the living room.
Cathryn quickly pulled herself together for the children's sake, busying herself with clearing the table and keeping her face averted.
"Such blasphemy!" said Gina with disbelief. Her hand was pressed against her bosom. "I'm afraid Charles has opened himself to the devil."
"How about a cannoli?" asked Jean Paul, carrying his plate to the sink.
With his father gone, Chuck felt a sense of exhilaration. He knew now that he could stand up against his father and
win. Watching Cathryn clear the table, he tried to catch her eye. She had to have noticed how he stood his ground, and
Chuck certainly noticed how Cathryn had backed him up. Pushing back his chair, he carried his plate to the sink and dutifully ran water over it.

Charles fled from the house with no goal other than to escape the infuriating atmosphere. Crunching through the crusted snow, he ran down toward the pond. The New England weather, true to form, had completely changed. The northeastern storm had blown out to sea and was replaced by

an arctic front that froze everything in its tracks. Despite the fact he had been running, he could feel a raw chill, especially since he'd not taken the time to get his coat. Without a conscious decision, he veered left toward Michelle's playhouse, noting that the change in the wind had effectively eliminated the smell from the chemical factory. Thank God!

After stamping his feet on the porch to remove any snow. Charles bent over and entered the miniature house. The interior was only ten feet long and a central archway divided it roughly in two: one-half was the living room with a

built-in banquette; the other the kitchen, with a small table and sink. The playhouse had running water (in the summer) and one electrical outlet. From about age six to nine Michelle

had made tea here for Charles on Sunday summer afternoons. The small hotplate she used was still working and Charles switched it on for a little heat.

Sitting down on the banquette, he stretched his legs out

and crossed them, conserving as much body heat as possible. Still he soon began to shiver. The doll's house was only a refuge from the icy wind, not from the cold.

As the solitude had the desired effect, Charles quickly calmed down, admitting that he had handled Chuck badly. Charles knew he had yet to come to terms with the disastrous

day. He marveled how he had allowed himself to be lulled into a false sense of security over the last few years. He thought back to the morning . . . making love with Cathryn. In just twelve hours all the threads of his carefully organized world had unraveled.

Leaning forward so he could look up through the front window, Charles gazed at the canopy of sky. It had become a

clear, star-studded night, and he could see forever, out into distant galaxies. The sight was beautiful but lifeless and

all at once Charles felt an overwhelming sense of futility and loneliness. His eyes filled with tears, and he

leaned back so that he couldn't see the terrible beauty of the winter sky. Instead he looked out over the snow-covered

landscape of the frozen pond. Immediately in front of him was the area of open water Jean Paul had asked about that

morning.

Charles marveled at the depths of his loneliness, as if Michelle had already been taken from him. He didn't understand these feelings although he guessed it might have something to do with guilt; if he had only been more attentive to Michelle's symptoms; if he had only paid more attention to his family; if he had only carried out his research faster.

He wished he could put everything aside and just work on his own project. Maybe he could find a cure in time for Michelle. But Charles knew that was an impossible goal.

Besides, he could not oppose Dr. Ibanez so openly. He could not afford to lose his job or the use of his lab. Suddenly Charles understood the directors' cleverness in putting him on the Canceran project. Charles was disliked because of his unorthodoxy, but he was respected because of his scientific ability. Charles was a foil who lent the desired legitimacy that the project needed and a perfect scapegoat if the project failed. It was a decision of administrative genius.

In the distance Charles heard Cathryn's voice calling his name. In the frigid air the sound was almost metallic.

Charles didn't move. One second he felt like crying, the next so weak that physical activity of any sort was impossible. What was he going to do about Michelle? If the chance of a remission faded, could he stand to watch her suffer with the treatment?

He moved over to the window and scraped off the frost his breath had created. Through the clear areas he could see the silver-blue snowscape and the patch of water directly in front of him. Guessing that the temperature was close to

zero, Charles began to wonder about that open water. His original explanation to Jean Paul that morning had been that the current prevented it from icing over. But that was when the temperature

hovered about the freezing mark. Now it was some thirty degrees below that. Charles wondered whether there was much current at that time of year. In the spring

when the snows melted in the mountain to the north, the river raged and the pond rose by a foot-and-a-half. Then there

would be current, not now.

Suddenly Charles was aware of a sweet aromatic smell. It had been there all the time but had not penetrated his

consciousness until that moment. It was vaguely familiar, but out of context. He'd smelled it before, but where?

Eager for a distraction, Charles began to sniff around.

The odor was about equal in intensity in the two rooms and strongest near the floor. Sniffing repeatedly, Charles tried to place the smell in his past. Suddenly it came to him: organic chemistry lab in college! He was smelling an organic solvent like benzene, toluene, or xylene. But what was it doing in the playhouse?

Braving the cold wind, Charles went out into the

knife-sharp night. With his right hand he clutched his sweater tightly around his neck. Outside the aromatic odor was diminished because of the wind, but by bending down at the side of the playhouse, Charles determined the smell was coming from the partially frozen mud around and under the structure. Making his way down to the pond's edge, Charles scooped up some of the icy water and brought it to his nose. There was no mistaking it: the smell was coming from the pond.

He followed the gradual curve of the pond, walking along

the edge of the open water to the point where it merged with the inlet from the river. Bending down again, he brought some water to his nose. The odor was stronger. Breaking into a

jog, Charles followed the inlet to the juncture with the

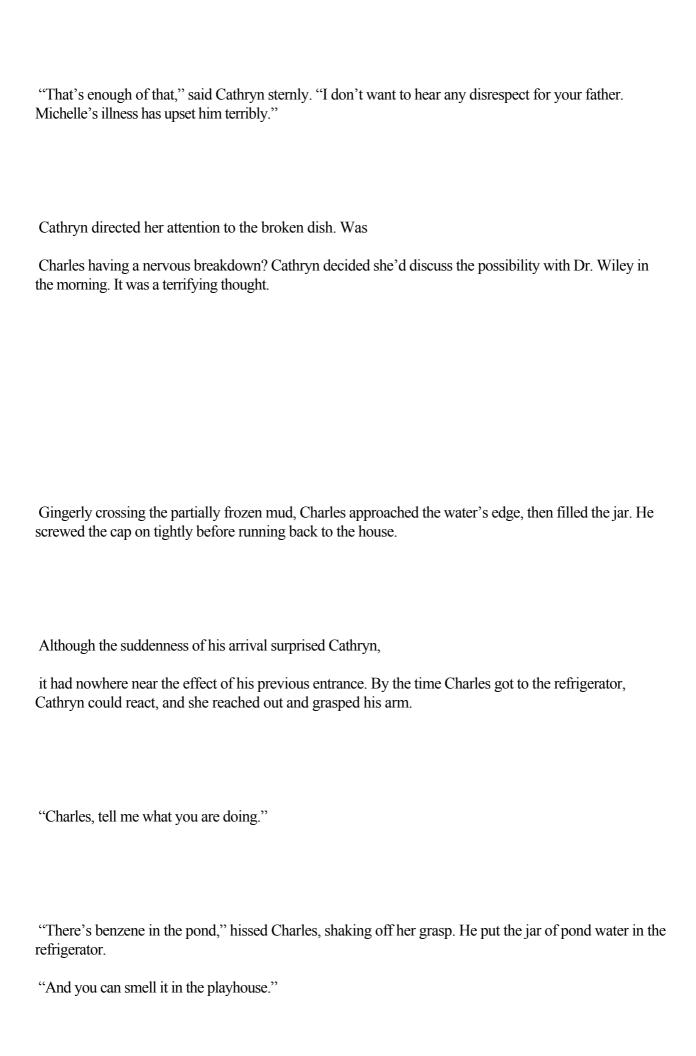
brought a sample to his nose. The odor was even more intense. The smell was coming from the river. Standing up, shaking from the cold, Charles stared upstream. Recycle, Ltd., the plastic/rubber recycling plant was up there. Charles knew from his chemistry background that benzene was used as a solvent for both plastics and rubber. Benzene! A powerful thought gripped his mind: Benzene causes leukemia; in fact it causes myeloblastic leukemia! **Turning** his head, Charles's eyes followed the trail of the unfrozen, open water. It led directly to the playhouse: the one spot Michelle had spent more time than any other. Like a crazed man, Charles sprinted for the house. The uneven snow tripped him and he fell headlong, landing on his chest with his palms outstretched. He was unhurt save for a cut on his chin. Picking himself up, he ran more slowly. When he reached the house, he thundered up the back steps and banged open the door. Cathryn, already taut as a tightened bowstring, involuntarily shrieked as Charles hurled himself breathlessly into the kitchen. The dish she was holding slipped from her hands and shattered on the floor.

Pawtomack River. It, too, was unfrozen. Again, Charles

"I want a container," gasped Charles, ignoring Cathryn's reaction.
Gina appeared at the door to the dining room, her face reflecting terror. Chuck materialized behind her, then pushed past to gain access to the kitchen. He stepped between Charles and Cathryn. He didn't care if his father was bigger than he was.
Charles's breathing was labored. After a few seconds, he was able to repeat his request.
"A container?" asked Cathryn who'd regained some of her composure. "What kind of a container?"
"Glass," said Charles. "Glass with a tight top."
"What for?" asked Cathryn. It seemed like an absurd request.  "For pond water," said Charles.
Jean Paul appeared beside Gina who stuck out her arm to keep him from entering the kitchen.
"Why do you want pond water?" asked Cathryn.

"Christ!" managed Charles. "Is this an interrogation?" He started for the refrigerator.
Chuck tried to step in his way, but Charles merely swept
the boy out of his path. Chuck stumbled, and Cathryn grabbed his arm, keeping him from falling.
Charles turned at the commotion and saw Cathryn restraining his son. "What the hell is going on here?" he demanded.
Chuck struggled for an instant, glaring at his father.
Charles looked from one face to another. Gina and Jean
Paul looked shocked; Chuck, furious; and Cathryn, frightened. But no one spoke. It was as if the scene was a freeze frame in a motion picture. Charles shook his head in disbelief and turned his attention to the refrigerator.
He pulled out a jar of apple juice and closed the door. Without a moment's hesitation he dumped the remaining
contents down the sink, rinsed the jar thoroughly, and yanked his sheepskin coat off its hook. At the door he turned to glance at his family. No one had moved. Charles had no idea what was happening but since he knew what he wanted to do, he left, closing the door on the strange scene.

Releasing her hold on Chuck, Cathryn stared blankly at the door, her mind going over the disturbing discussion she'd had with Dr. Keitzman and Dr. Wiley. She'd thought their
questions about Charles's emotions had been ridiculous, but now she wasn't so sure. Certainly, flying out of the house in anger in the dead of winter without a coat, only to return a half hour later in great excitement, looking for a container for pond water, was curious at best.
"I'd never let him hurt you," said Chuck. He pushed back
his hair with a nervous hand.
"Hurt me?" said Cathryn, taken by surprise. "Your father's not going to hurt me!"
"I'm afraid he's let in the devil," said Gina. "Once he's done that, you can't tell what he's going to do."
"Mother, please!" cried Cathryn.
"Is Charles going to have a nervous breakdown?" teased
Jean Paul from the doorway.
"He's already had one," answered Chuck.



Charles whirled back to the door. Cathryn ran after him, managing to get hold of his coat. "Charles, where are you going? What's the matter with you?"

With unnecessary force, Charles wrenched his coat free.

"I'm going to Recycle, Ltd. That's where the goddamn benzene is coming from. I'm sure of it."

## **SEVEN**

Charles pulled the red Pinto off Main Street and stopped in front of the gate in the hurricane fence surrounding Recycle, Ltd. The gate was unlocked and opened easily. He stepped back into his car and drove into the factory's parking area.

The evening shift couldn't have been too large because there were only a half dozen or so beat-up cars near the

entrance to the old brick mill building. To the left of the factory, the huge piles of discarded tires rose up like miniature snowcapped mountains. Between the used tires and the building were smaller heaps of plastic and vinyl debris. To the right of the factory was a rubbish-strewn, empty lot bisected by the hurricane fence that ran down to the

Pawtomack River. Beyond the fence the deserted mill buildings stretched for a quarter of a mile to the north.

As soon as Charles got out of his car, he was enveloped by

the same stench that had assaulted his house that morning. It amazed him that people could live to the immediate west of town, the direction of the prevailing winds. Locking the car, he started toward the entrance, an unimposing aluminum storm door. Above it, RECYCLE, LTD. UNAUTHORIZED ENTRY FOR-BIDDEN was written in block letters. Taped to the inside of the

glass was a cardboard sign which said: INQUIRIES, followed by a local telephone number.

Charles tried the door, which was unlocked. If he had thought the odor bad outside, inside it was far worse. He found himself choking on the heavy, chemical-laden air in a small office of sorts. It was a plywood-veneer paneled room

with a beat-up Formica counter that held a wire letter basket and a stainless steel bell, the kind you hit with the palm of your hand. Charles did just that, but the noise was swallowed up by the hisses and rumbles coming from within the factory proper.

Charles decided to try the inner door. At first it

wouldn't open but when he pulled more forcibly it swung inward. As soon as it opened, Charles saw why it was insulated. It was as if it were a portal into hell itself. The combination of stench and noise was overpowering.

Charles entered a huge two-story-high room, poorly lit and dominated by a row of gigantic pressure-cooker-type apparatus. Metal ladders and catwalks ascended and crisscrossed in bewildering confusion. Large, clanking conveyor belts brought in piles of plastic and vinyl debris mixed with all sorts of disagreeable trash. The first people Charles saw were a pair of sweating men in sleeveless undershirts, with black-smudged faces like coal miners, sorting out the glass, wooden objects, and empty cans from the plastic.

"Is there a manager here?" yelled Charles, trying to be heard over the din.

One of the men looked up for an instant, indicated that he couldn't hear, then went back to his sorting. Apparently the conveyor belt didn't stop and they had to keep up with it. At the end of the belt was a large hopper which, when full,

would rise up, position itself over an available pressure cooker, and dump its contents of plastic scrap. Charles saw a man with a large, scimitarlike knife up on the catwalk slit open two bags of chemicals, one white, the other black. With what appeared like great effort he dumped the two bags into the ovens in a great cloud of dust. For a moment the man disappeared from view. When he reappeared, he had closed the hatch and activated the steam, sending a fresh mixture of smoke, odor, and noise into the room.

Although Charles couldn't get anyone's attention, no one asked him to leave, either. Boldly he skirted the conveyor belts, keeping his eyes on the floor which was strewn with

trash and puddles of oil and grease. He passed a cinder-block wall housing the automated machinery bringing in the tires to be melted down. It was from this area that the smell that Charles associated with the factory originated. Up close it was far more powerful.

Just beyond the wall, Charles found a large wire cage secured with a stout padlock. It was obviously a storeroom

because Charles could see shelving with spare parts, tools, and containers of industrial chemicals. The walls were made of the same material that formed the hurricane fence outside. Charles put his fingers through the mesh to support himself while he scanned the labels on the containers. He found what he was looking for directly in front of him. There were two steel drums with benzene stenciled on the sides. There were also the familiar skull and crossbone decals warning that the contents were poisonous. As he looked at the drums, Charles was shaken by a new wave of rage.

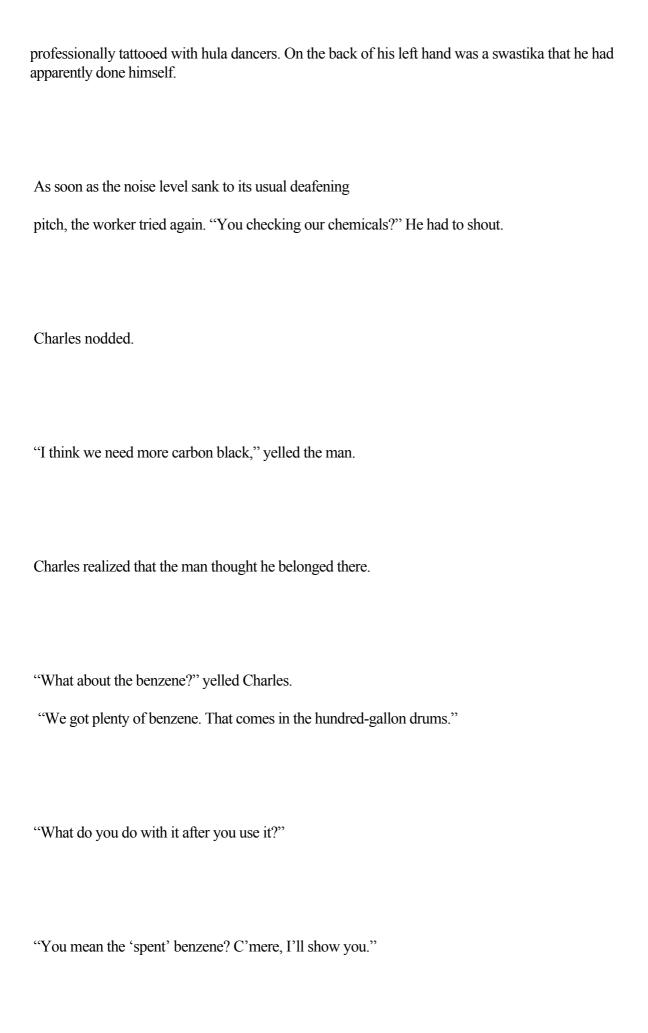
A hand gripped Charles's shoulder and he spun about, flattening himself against the wire mesh.

"What can I do for you?" yelled a huge man trying to be heard over the thunderous din of the machinery. But the instant he spoke, a whistle blew above one of the plastic pressure cookers as it completed its cycle, making further conversation impossible. It burst open and belched forth an

enormous amount of black, viscous, depolymerized plastic. The hot liquid was poured into cooling vats sending up billows of acrid vapors.

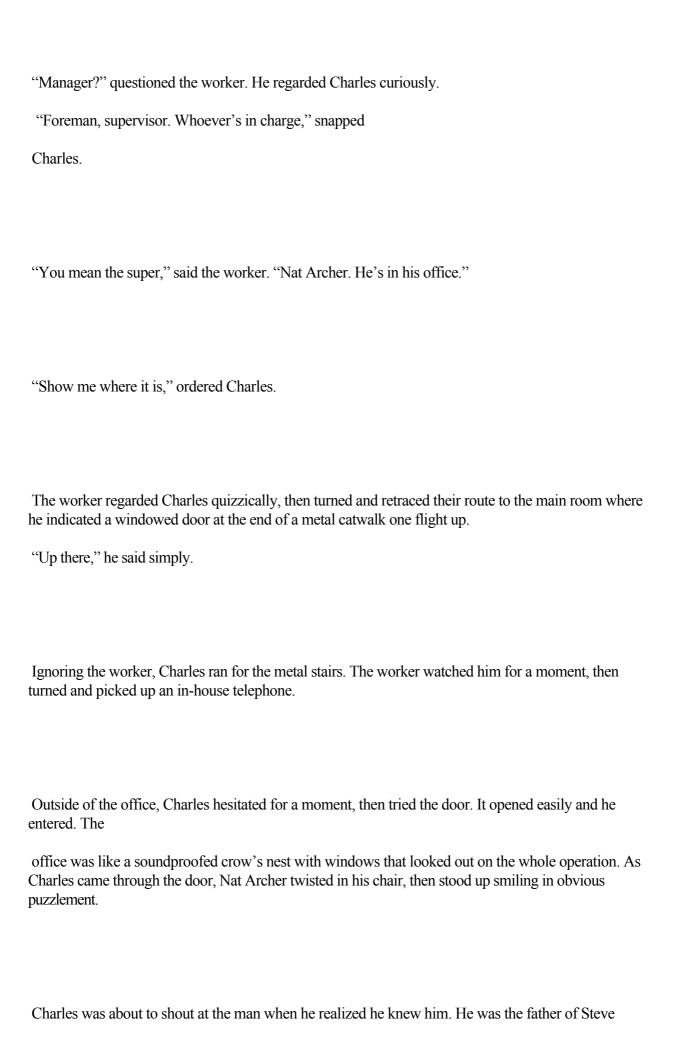
Charles looked at the man in front of him. He was a full head taller than Charles. His perspiring face was so pudgy that his eyes were mere slits. He was dressed like the other

men Charles had seen. His sleeveless undershirt was stretched over a beer belly of awesome dimensions. The man was supporting a dolly, and Charles noticed his massive forearms were

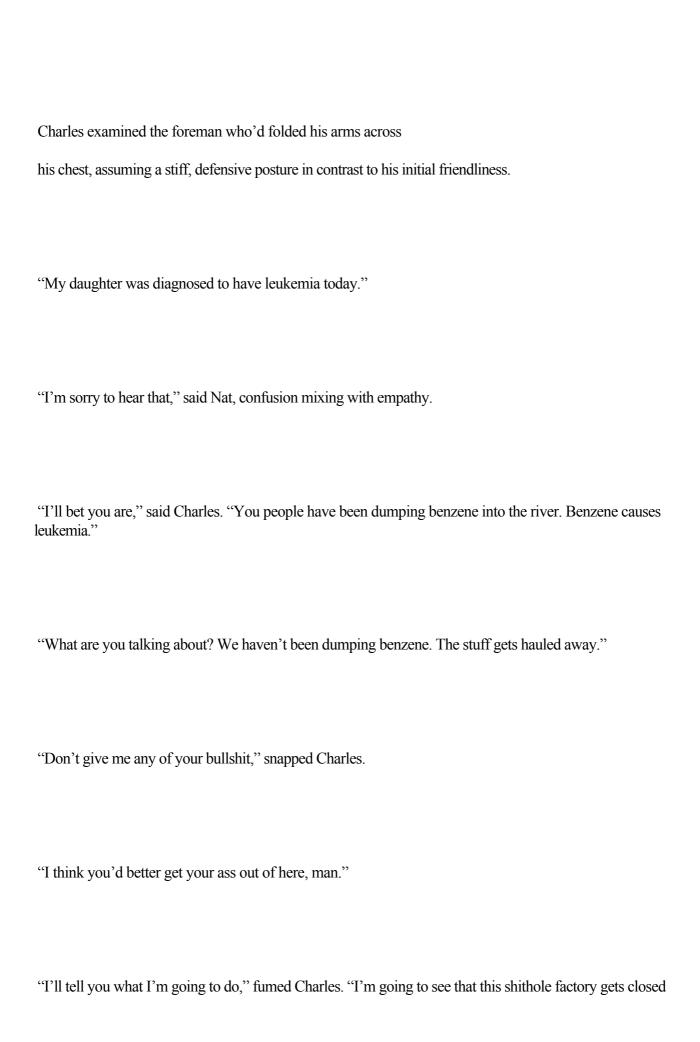


The man leaned his dolly against the wire cage and led
Charles across the main room, between two of the rubber ovens where the radiant heat was intense. They ducked under an overhang and entered a hallway that led to a lunch room where the noise was somewhat less. There were two picnic tables, a soda dispenser, and a cigarette machine. Between the soda dispenser and the cigarette machine was a window. The man brought Charles over to it and pointed outside. "See those tanks out there?"
Charles cupped his hands around his eyes and peered out. About fifty feet away and quite close to the riverbank were
two cylindrical tanks. Even with the bright moon, he couldn't see any details.
"Does any of the benzene go in the river?" asked Charles, turning back to the worker.
"Most of it is trucked away to God-knows-where. But you
know those disposal companies. When the tanks get too full, we drain them into the river; it's no problem. We do it at night and it washes right away. Goes out to the ocean. To tell you the truth" The man leaned over as if he were telling a secret: "I think that fucking disposal company dumps it into the river, too. And they charge a goddamn fortune."
Charles felt his jaw tighten. He could see Michelle in the hospital bed with the IV running into her arm.

"Where's the manager?" asked Charles, suddenly displaying his anger.

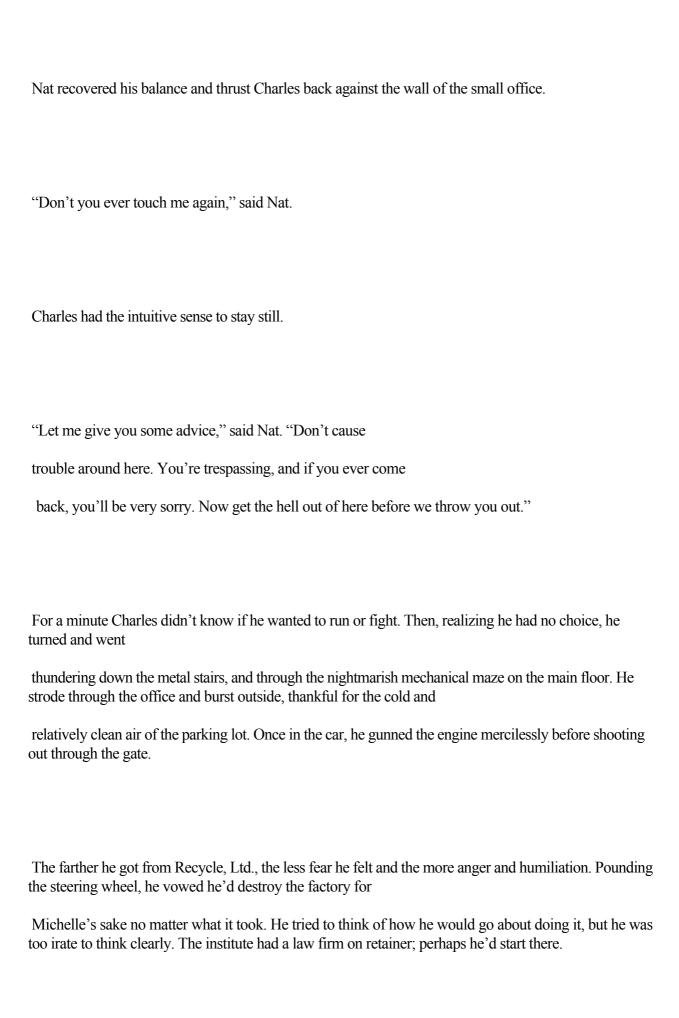


Archer, a close friend of Jean Paul's. The Archers were one of Shaftesbury's few black families.
"Charles Martel!" said Nat, extending his hand. "You're about the last person I expected to come through that door." Nat was a friendly, outgoing man who moved in a slow, controlled fashion, like a restrained athlete.
Taken off balance in finding someone he knew, Charles stammered that he wasn't making a social call.
"Okay," said Nat, eyeing Charles more closely. "Why don't you sit down?"
"I'll stand," said Charles. "I want to know who owns Recycle, Ltd."
Nat hesitated. When he finally spoke he sounded wary.  "Breur Chemicals of New Jersey is the parent company. Why do you ask?"
"Who's the manager here?"
"Harold Dawson out on Covered Bridge Road. Charles, I
think you should tell me what this is all about. Maybe I can save you some trouble."









Charles pulled off 301 into his driveway, pushing the accelerator to the floor, spinning the wheels and shooting gravel up inside the fenders. The car skidded first to one side and then the other. Out of the corner of his eye he

could see the lace curtains of one of the living room windows part and Cathryn's face come into view for a second. He skidded to a stop just beyond the back porch and turned off the ignition.

He sat for a moment, gripping the steering wheel, hearing the engine cool off in the icy air. The reckless drive had calmed his emotions and gave him a chance to think. Perhaps

it had been stupid to charge up to Recycle, Ltd. at that time of night, although he had to admit he'd accomplished one thing: he knew for certain where the benzene in the pond was coming from. Yet now that he thought about it, he recognized that the real issue was taking care of Michelle and making

the hard decisions about treatment. As a scientist he knew that the mere presence of benzene in the pond did not constitute proof that it had caused Michelle's leukemia. No one had yet proved that benzene caused leukemia in humans, only in animals. Besides, Charles recognized that he was using Recycle, Ltd. to divert the hostility and anger caused by Michelle's sickness.

Slowly he got out of the car, wishing once again that he'd worked faster over the last four to five years on his own research so that now he might have something to offer his daughter. Immersed in thought, he was startled when Cathryn met him in the doorway. Her face was awash with fresh tears, her chest trembling as she fought to control her sobs.

"What's wrong?" asked Charles with horror. His first reaction was that something had happened to Michelle.

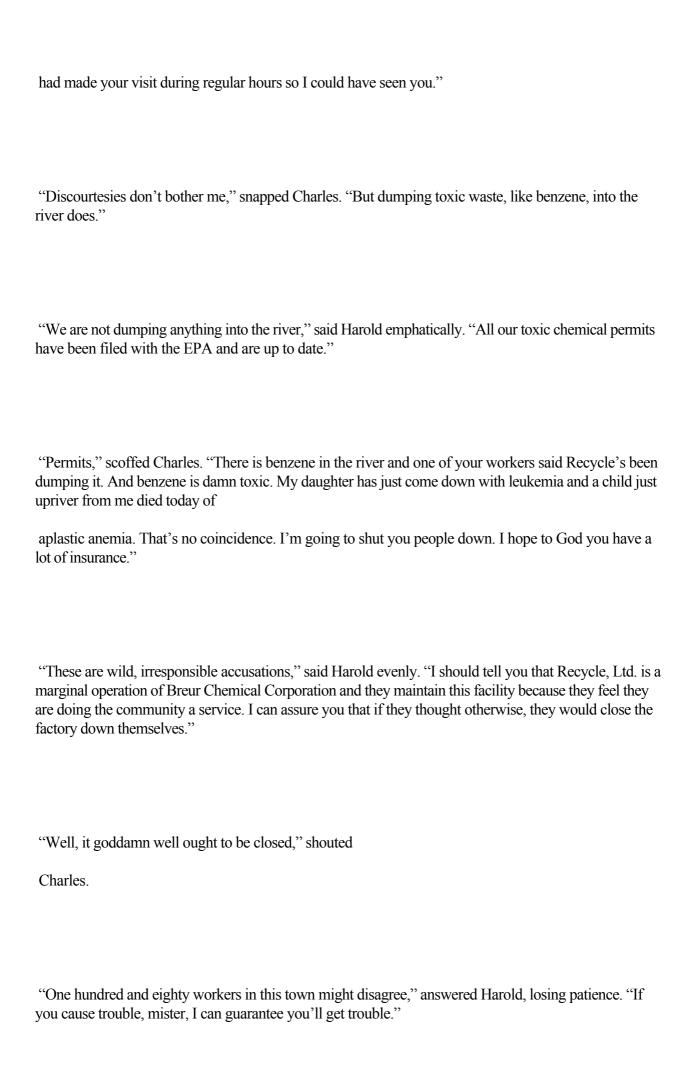
"Nancy Schonhauser called," Cathryn managed to say.

"Little Tad died this evening. That poor dear child." Charles reached out and drew his wife to him, comforting her. At first he felt a sense of relief as if Michelle had

been spared. But then he remembered that the boy lived on the

Pawtomack River just as they did, only closer to town.

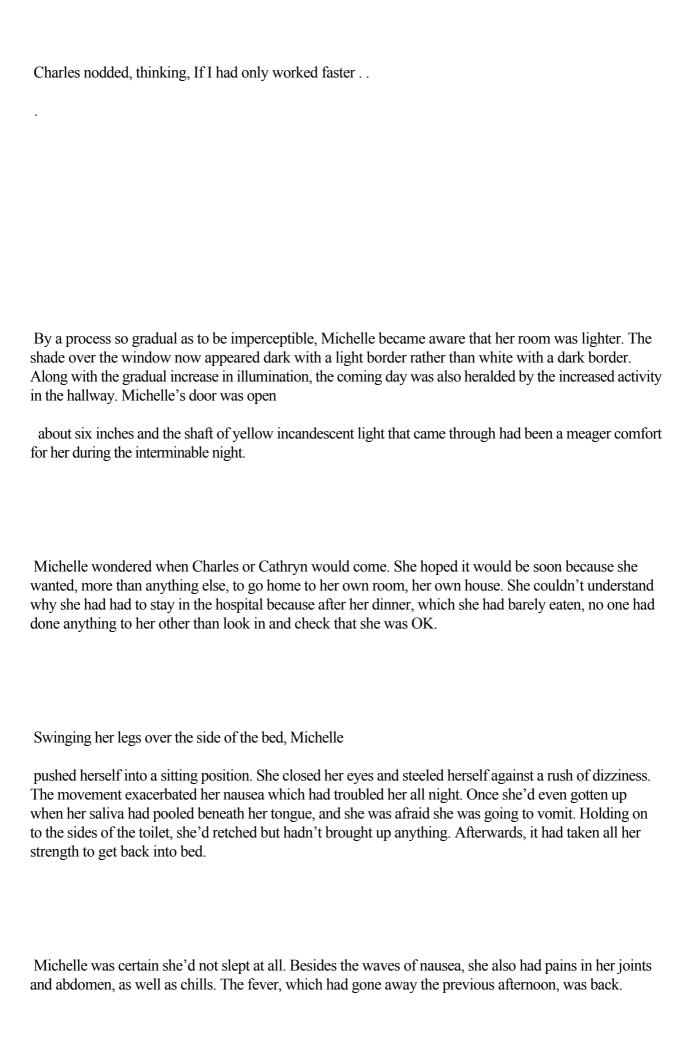
"I thought I'd go over to see Marge," continued Cathryn.
"But she's been hospitalized herself. She collapsed when they told her about Tad. Do you think I should go over to their house anyway and see if there is something I can do?"
Charles was no longer listening. Benzene caused aplastic anemia as well as leukemia! He'd forgotten about Tad. Now Michelle was no longer a single, isolated case of bone marrow disease. Charles wondered how many other families living
along the course of the Pawtomack River had been struck. All the anger Charles had felt earlier returned in an overwhelming rush, and he broke free from Cathryn.
"Did you hear me?" asked Cathryn, abandoned in the center of the room. She watched Charles go over to the telephone directory, look up a number, and dial. He seemed to have
forgotten she was there. "Charles," called Cathryn. "I asked you a question."
He looked at her uncomprehendingly until the connection went through. Then he directed his attention to the phone.
"Is this Harold Dawson?" demanded Charles.
"It is," returned the manager.
"My name is Dr. Charles Martel," said Charles. "I was down at Recycle, Ltd. tonight."
"I know," said Harold. "Nat Archer called me a while ago. I'm sorry for any discourtesies you experienced. I wish you



"I" began Charles but he realized he was holding a dead phone. Harold Dawson had hung up.
"God!" Charles shouted as he furiously shook the receiver. Cathryn took the phone away and replaced it in its cradle. She'd only heard Charles's side of the conversation, but it had upset her. She forced him to sit down at the kitchen table, and she shooed her mother away when she'd appeared at the door. Her face was streaked with tears, but she was no longer crying.
"I think you'd better tell me about the benzene," said Cathryn.
"It's a poison," fumed Charles. "It depresses the bone marrow somehow."
"And you don't have to eat it to be poisoned?"
"No. You don't have to ingest it. All you have to do is inhale it. It goes directly into the bloodstream. Why did I have to make that playhouse out of the old ice shed?"
"And you think it could have caused Michelle's leukemia?"

"I certainly do. Apparently she's been inhaling benzene all the time she's played there. Benzene causes the rare kind of leukemia that she has. It's too much of a coincidence. Especially with Tad's aplastic anemia."
"The benzene could have caused that?"
"Absolutely."
"And you think Recycle has been putting benzene into the river?"
"I know they have. That's what I found out tonight. And they're going to pay. I'll get the place shut down."
"And how are you going to do that?"
"I don't know yet. I'll talk to some people tomorrow. I'll get in touch with the EPA. Somebody is going to want to hear about it."

Cathryn studied Charles's face, thinking of Dr. Keitzman's and Dr. Wiley's questions. "Charles," began Cathryn, marshaling her courage. "This is all interesting and probably important but it seems to me that it's a little inappropriate at this time." "Inappropriate?" echoed Charles with disbelief. "Yes," said Cathryn. "We've just learned that Michelle has leukemia. I think that the primary focus should be taking care of her, not trying to get a factory shut down. There will always be time for that, but Michelle needs you now." Charles stared at his young wife. She was a survivor, coping in a difficult situation with great effort. How could he hope to make her understand that the core of the problem was that he really didn't have anything to offer Michelle except love? As a cancer researcher he knew too much about Michelle's disease; as a physician he couldn't be lured into false hope by the panoply of modern medicine; as a father he was terrified of what Michelle was going to face because he'd gone through a similar situation with his first wife. Yet Charles was an activist. He had to do something, and Recycle, Ltd. was there to keep from facing the reality of Michelle's illness and his deteriorating situation at the Weinburger Institute. Charles recognized that he couldn't communicate all this to Cathryn because she probably wouldn't understand it and if she did it would undermine her own hopes. Despite their intense love for each other, Charles accepted that he'd have to bear his burdens alone. The thought was crushing, and he collapsed in Cathryn's arms. "It's been a terrible day," whispered Cathryn, holding Charles as tightly as she could. "Let's go to bed and try to sleep."



Slowly Michelle slid off the bed onto her feet, gripping

the IV pole. Pushing the pole in front of her, she began to shuffle to the bathroom. The plastic IV tubing still went into her left arm, which she kept as immobile as possible. She knew there was a needle on the end of the tubing and she

was afraid that if she moved her arm, the needle would pierce her in some damaging way.

After going to the toilet, Michelle returned to her bed and climbed in. There was no way she could feel any more lonely or miserable.

"Well, well," beamed a redheaded nurse as she came bustling into the room. "Awake already. Aren't we

industrious?" She snapped up the window shade unveiling the new day.

Michelle watched her but didn't speak.

The nurse went around the other side of the bed and

plucked a thermometer out of a narrow stainless steel cup.

"What's the matter, cat got your tongue?" She flicked the thermometer, examined it, bent down, and poked it into Michelle's mouth. "Be back in a jiffy."

Waiting until the nurse was out the door, Michelle pulled the thermometer out of her mouth. She did not want anyone to

know she still had a fever in case that might keep her in the hospital. She held the thermometer in her right hand, near to her face so that when the nurse came back, she would be able to put it into her mouth quickly.

The next person through the door was a false alarm.

Michelle got the thermometer back into her mouth, but it was a man in a dirty white coat with hundreds of pens stuffed in his pocket. He carried a wire basket filled with glass test tubes with different-colored tops. He had strips of rubber tubing looped through the edges of his basket. Michelle knew what he wanted: blood.

She watched, terrified, as he made his preparations. He put a rubber tube about her arm so tight that her fingers hurt and roughly wiped the inside of her elbow with an

alcohol swab, even the tender spot where they'd taken blood the day before. Then using his teeth, he pulled the cap off a needle. Michelle wanted to scream. Instead, she turned her head to hide silent tears. The rubber was unsnapped, which caused about as much pain as when it was put on. She heard a glass tube drop into the wire basket. Then she felt another stab as he yanked the needle out. He applied a cotton ball to the puncture site, bent her arm so that it pressed against

the cotton, and gathered up his things. He left without saying a single word.

With one arm holding the cotton ball and the other with

the IV, Michelle felt totally immobilized. Slowly she unbent her arm. The cotton ball rolled aside revealing an innocent red puncture mark surrounded by a black-and-blue area.

"Okay," said the redheaded nurse, coming through the door.

"Let's see what we've got."

Michelle remembered with panic that the thermometer was still in her mouth.

Deftly the nurse extracted it, noted the temperature, then dropped it into the metal container on Michelle's night table. "Breakfast will be up in a moment," she said



"Enjoy your coffee," said Cathryn. She started for the door. "Gina got up and made it before I was even awake."

Charles glanced down at the mug in his hands. The fact

that Gina was still there was irritating enough. He did not want to have to feel beholden to her the first thing in the morning, but then he was holding the coffee and he knew she'd ask how it was and gloat over the fact that she'd arisen when everyone else was still asleep.

Charles shook his head. Such annoying thoughts were not

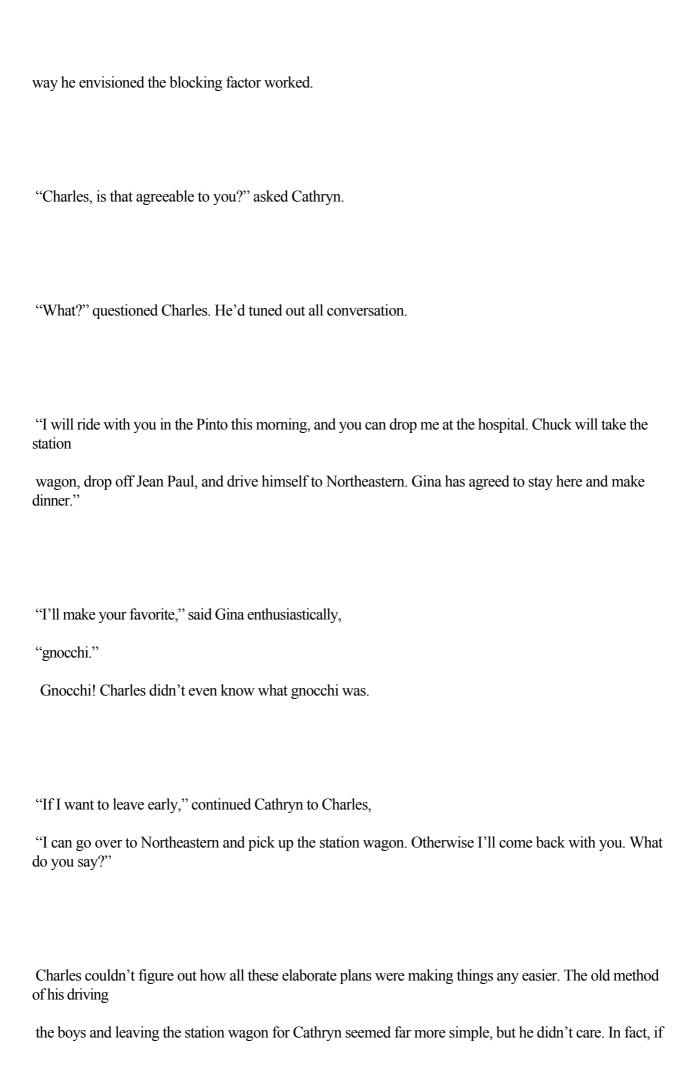
the way to begin the day. He tasted the coffee. It was hot, aromatic, and stimulating. He admitted that he enjoyed it and decided to tell Gina before she'd have a chance to ask, and then thank her for getting up before the others, before she had a chance to tell them.

Carrying his coffee mug, Charles padded down the hall to Michelle's room. He paused outside of the door, then slowly pushed it open. He had half hoped to see his young daughter safely sleeping in her bed, but of course her bed was neatly made, her books and memorabilia compulsively arranged, her room as neat as a pin. "All right," said Charles to himself, as if he were bargaining with an all-powerful arbiter, "she has myeloblastic leukemia. Just let her case be sensitive to current treatment. That's all I ask."

Breakfast was a strained affair, overshadowed by Gina's

forced ebullience and Charles's reserve. One fed the other in a self-fulfilling prophecy until Gina was chatting nonstop

and Charles perfectly silent. Cathryn interrupted with complicated plans about who was going to do what, when. Charles stayed out of the domestic decision making and concentrated on planning his day's work at the institute. The first thing he wanted to do was check the well mice injected with the cancer antigen for signs of immunological activity. Most likely there would be no response with such a light dose and he would prepare to give them another challenge that afternoon. Then he would check the mice injected with the Canceran and reinject them. Then he would start work on a computer simulation of the

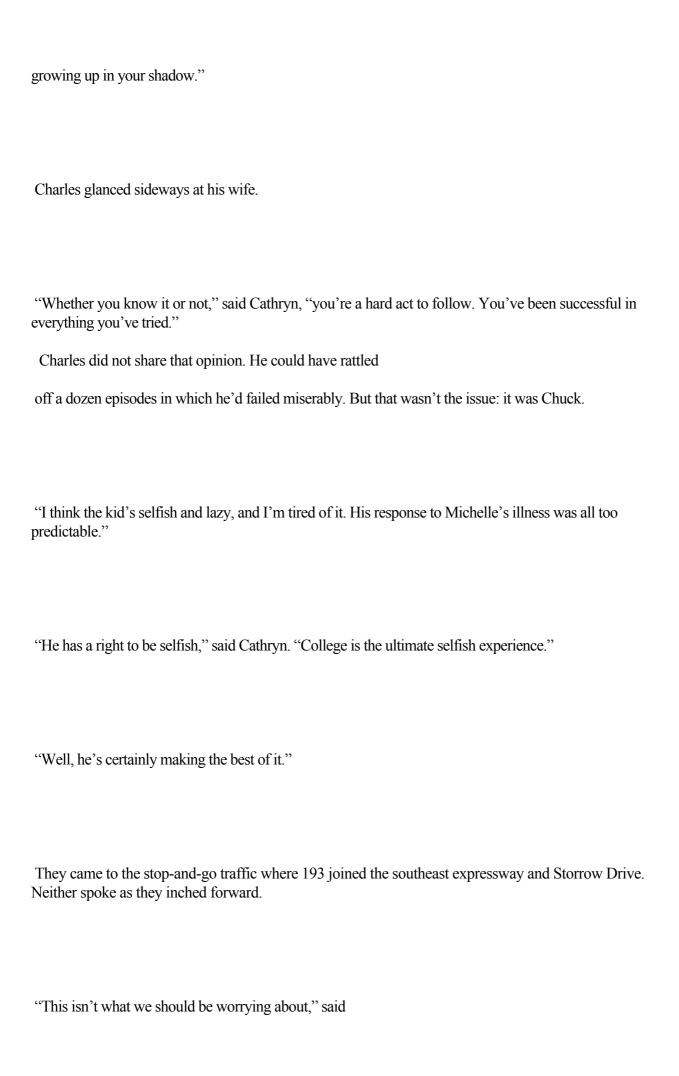


Chuck pretended he hadn't heard the question.
"I think we should be going," said Cathryn, getting to her feet and collecting the milk and butter to put into the refrigerator.
"Just leave everything," said Gina magnanimously. "I'll take care of it."
Charles and Cathryn were the first out of the house. A pale winter sun hung low in the southeastern sky. As cold as it was inside the Pinto, Cathryn was relieved to get out of the biting wind.
"Damn," said Charles, blowing on his fingers. "I forgot the pond water."
For Cathryn's sake, Charles started the car, which was no easy task, before running back into the kitchen for the jar of pond water. He carefully wedged it behind his seat to keep it from spilling before he climbed into the car and fumbled with his seat belt.
Cathryn watched this procedure with the pond water with a certain misgiving. After her little talk to Charles the night before she'd hoped that he would concentrate on Michelle. But Charles had acted strangely from the moment she'd awakened



yesterday, but now
he realized that he couldn't share everything. His background as a physician had imparted experiences that Cathryn could
not comprehend. If Charles told what he knew about the course of Michelle's illness, she'd be devastated.
Taking a hand from the steering wheel, Charles placed it
over Cathryn's. "The children don't know how lucky they are,"
he said.
They rode in silence for a while. Cathryn wasn't
satisfied, but she didn't know what else to say. In the far distance she could just make out the top of the Prudential building. The traffic began to increase, and they had to slow to forty miles per hour.
"I don't know anything about tissue-typing and all that," said Cathryn, breaking the silence. "But I don't think we should force Chuck to do something he doesn't want to do."
Charles glared at Cathryn for a moment.
"I'm sure he will come around," she continued when she realized that Charles wasn't going to speak. "But he has to agree on his own."
Charles took his hand off Cathryn's and gripped the
steering wheel. The mere mention of Chuck was like stoking a smoldering fire. Yet what Cathryn was saying was undeniably true.







"She got her Daunorubicin yesterday afternoon," said the nurse. "She got her first oral dose of Thioguanine this morning, and she'll start with the Cytarabine this afternoon."
The names jolted Charles but he forced himself to keep smiling. He knew too well the potential side effects and the information silently echoed in his head. "Please," said Charles to himself. "Please, let her go into remission." Charles knew that if it would happen, it would happen immediately. He thanked the nurse, turned, and walked toward Michelle's room. The closer he got, the more nervous he became. He loosened his tie and unbuttoned the top button of his shirt.
"It's nice the way they have decorated to brighten the atmosphere," remarked Cathryn, noticing the animal decals for the first time.
Charles stopped for a moment outside the door, trying to compose himself.
"This is it," said Cathryn, thinking that Charles was uncertain of the room number. She pushed open the door, entered, and pulled Charles in behind her.
Michelle was propped up in a sitting position with several pillows behind her back. At the sight of Charles, her face twisted and she burst into tears. Charles was shocked at her appearance. Although he had not thought it possible, she looked even paler than she had the day before. Her eyes had visibly sunk into their sockets and were surrounded by circles so dark they looked like she had black eyes. In the air hung the rank smell of fresh vomit.
Charles wanted to run and hold her, but he couldn't move. The agony of his inadequateness held him back, although she lifted her arms to him.

Her disease was too powerful, and he had nothing to offer

her, just like with Elizabeth eight years earlier. The nightmare had returned. In an avalanche of horror, Charles recognized that Michelle was not going to get better. Suddenly he knew without the slightest doubt that all the palliative treatment in the world would not touch the inevitable progression of her illness. Under the weight of

this knowledge Charles staggered, taking a step back from the bed.

Although Cathryn did not understand, she saw what was happening and she ran to fill Michelle's outstretched arms. Looking over Cathryn's shoulder, Michelle met her father's eyes. Charles smiled weakly but Michelle decided that he was angry with her.

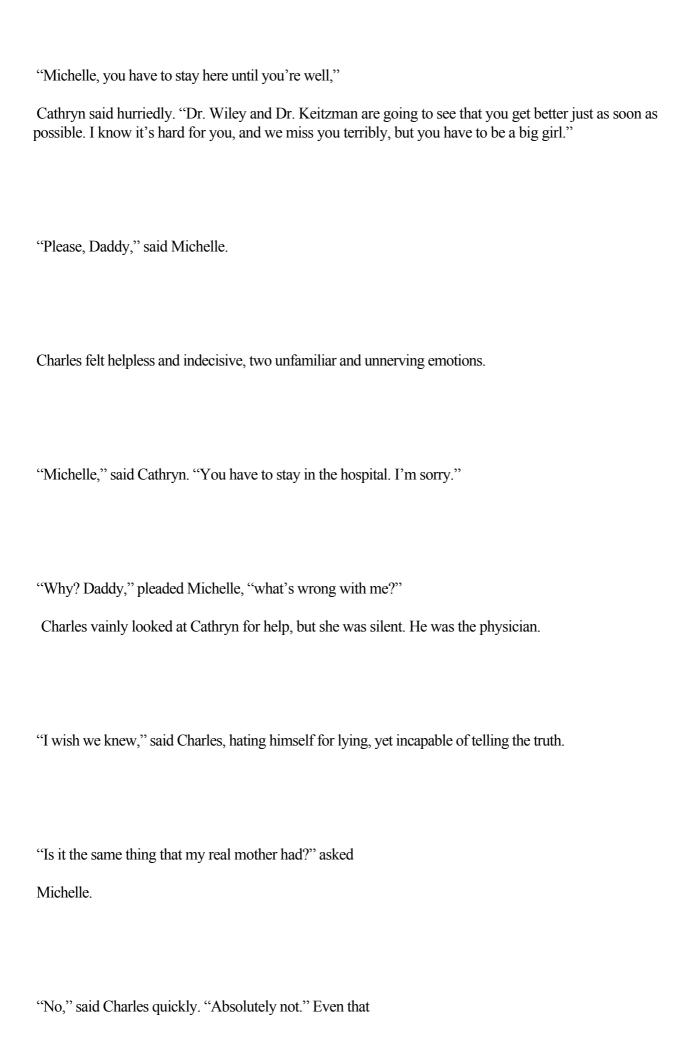
"It's so good to see you," said Cathryn, looking into

Michelle's face. "How are you?"

"I'm fine," managed Michelle, checking her tears. "I just want to go home. Can I go home, Daddy?"

Charles's hands shook as he approached the foot of the bed. He steadied them on the metal frame.

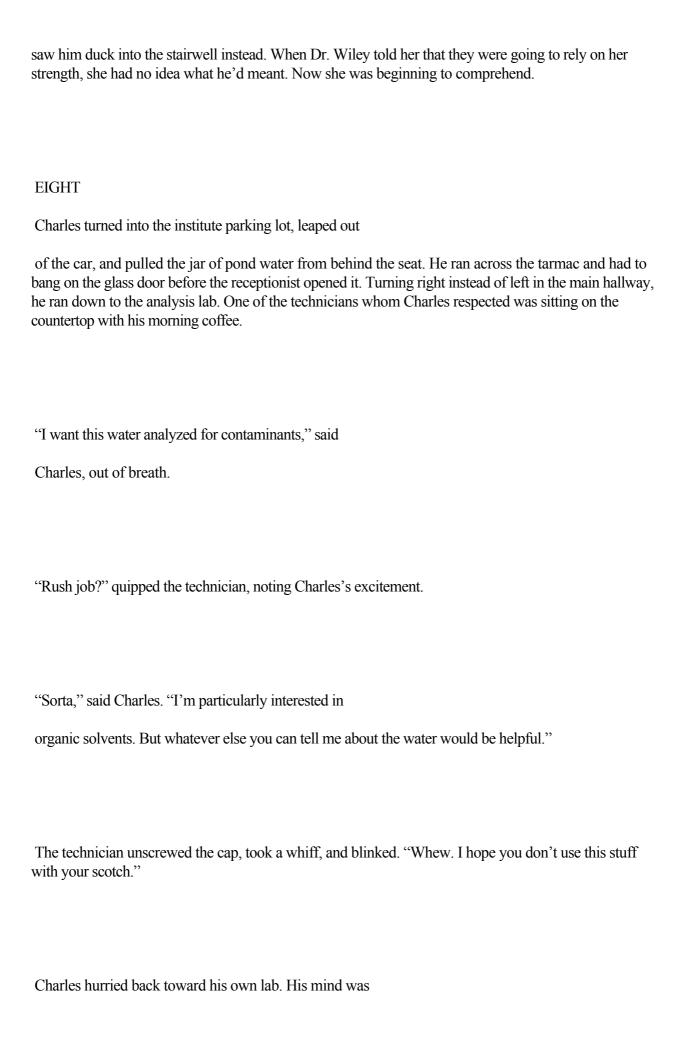
"Maybe," said Charles evasively. Maybe he should just take her out of the hospital; take her home and keep her comfortable; maybe that was best.

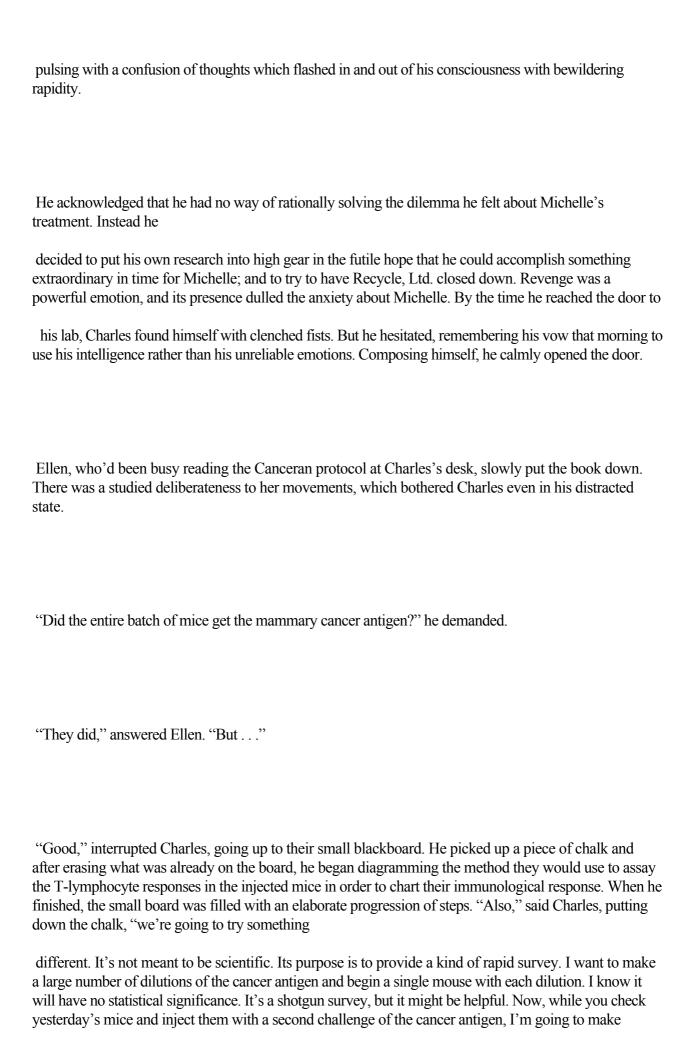




at the edge of	an abyss and Charles was her only salvation. She looked into the blue eyes that were
mirrors of her	
But she though	ght she saw firmness instead of acquiescence; irritation instead of understanding. She let go
	d fell back onto the pillow.
"I'll be over la	ater, Michelle," said Charles, upset that
	was already causing potentially dangerous side effects. To the aide Charles said: "Does she g ordered for nausea and vomiting?"
"Indeed she d minute."	oes," said the nurse. "There is a standing order for Compazine PRN. I'll get her some in a
"Is it a needle	?" cried Michelle.
"No, it's a pill	," said the aide. "Provided your tummy
keeps it down	. If not, then it will have to go in your rump." She gave Michelle's foot a playful squeeze.
•	
"I'll just walk	Charles to the elevator, Michelle," said
G 4 :	ng Charles start for the door. She caught up

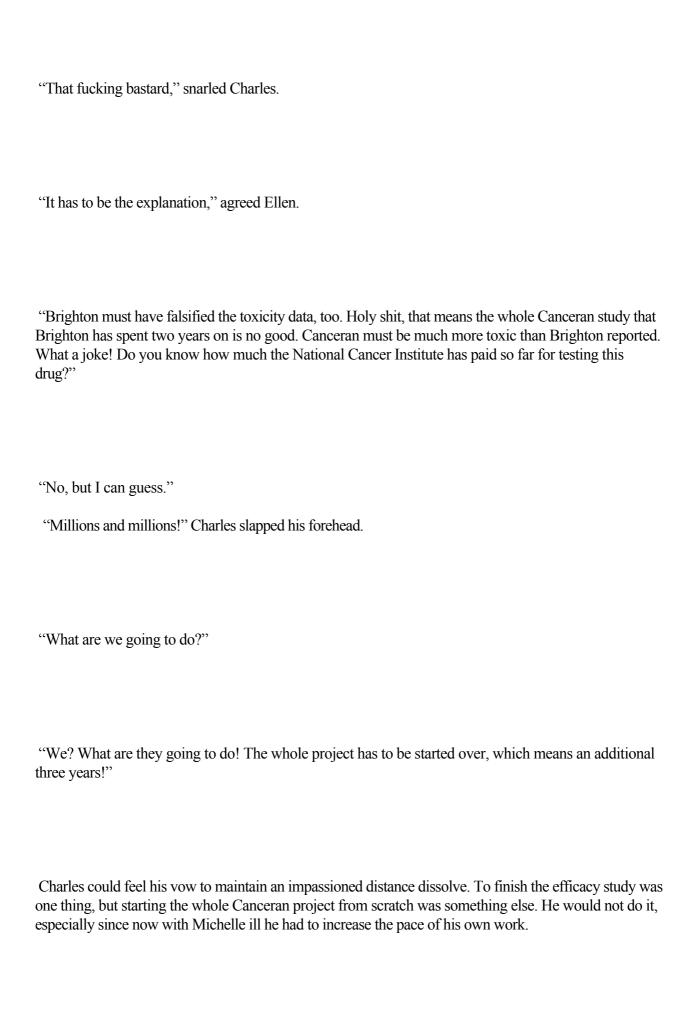




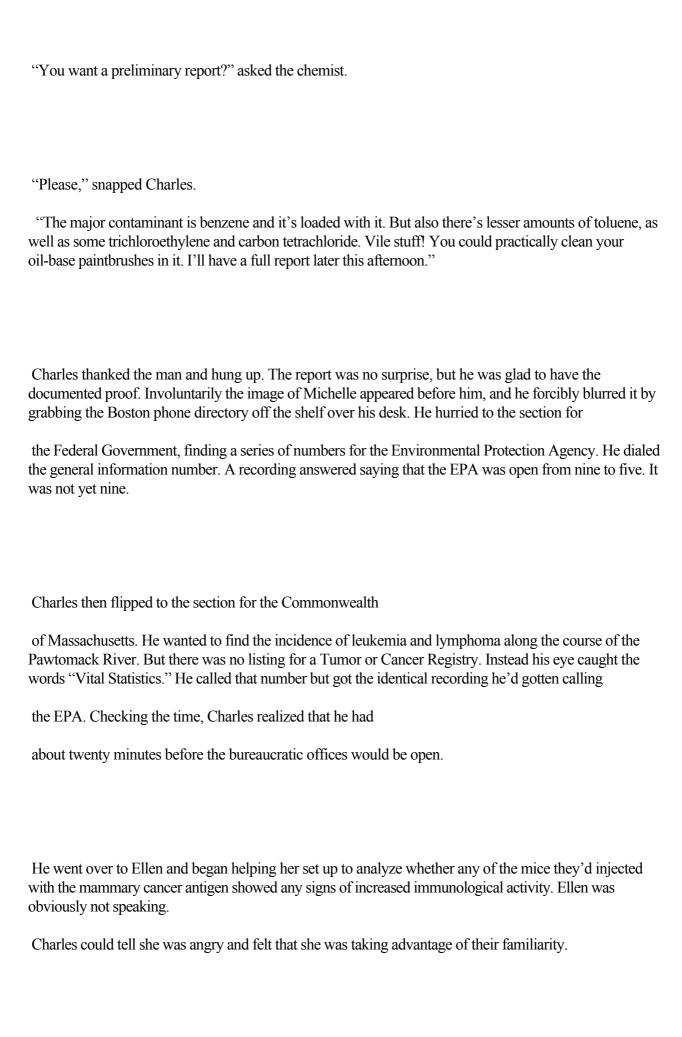


some calls." Charles wiped the chalk dust on his trousers, reaching for the phone.
"Can I say something now?" queried Ellen, cocking her head to the side with an I-told-you-so expression.
"Of course," said Charles, holding the receiver.
"I checked the mice who got the first dose of Canceran." She paused.
"Yeah?" said Charles, wondering what was coming.
"Almost all of them died last night."  Charles's face clouded with disbelief. "What happened?" He put down the receiver.
"I don't know," admitted Ellen. "There's no explanation except for the Canceran."
"Did you check the dilution?"









While he worked Charles allowed himself to fantasize about his latest research approach. What if the mice injected with the mammary cancer antigen responded to the antigen rapidly and the acquired sensitivity could be easily transferred to the cancerous mice via the transfer factor? Then the cancerous mice would cure themselves of that particular strain. It was beautifully simple . . . maybe too simple, thought Charles. If only it would work. If only he could speed up the whole process for Michelle . . .

The next time Charles looked up, it was well after nine. Leaving Ellen in her sullen mood, Charles went back to his desk and called the EPA General Information number. This time it was answered by a woman with a bored Boston accent.

Charles introduced himself and said he wanted to report serious dumping of poisonous material into a river.

The woman was not impressed. She put Charles on hold.

Another woman picked up, who sounded so similar to the

first that Charles was surprised when she asked him to repeat his request.

"You've got the wrong extension," said the woman. "This is the Water Programs Division and we don't handle dumping. You want the Toxic Chemicals Program. Just a minute."

Charles was again put on hold. There was a click followed

by a dial tone. Charles dropped the receiver and grabbed the phone directory. Checking under the EPA he found the listing for Toxic Chemical Program and dialed it.

An identical voice answered. Charles wondered if they cloned people at the EPA. Charles repeated his request but was told that the Toxic Chemical Program had nothing to do
with infractions and that he should call the number for Oil and Hazardous Material Spills. She gave it to him and hung up before he could reply.
He redialed, punching the numbers so hard that the tip of his middle finger tingled in protest.
Another woman! Charles repeated his request without trying to hide his annoyance.
"When did the spill take place?" asked the woman.
"This is continuous dumping, not a one-time accident."
"I'm sorry," said the woman. "We only handle spills."
"Can I speak to your supervisor?" growled Charles.
"Just a minute," sighed the woman.
Charles waited impatiently, rubbing his face with his hands. He was perspiring.

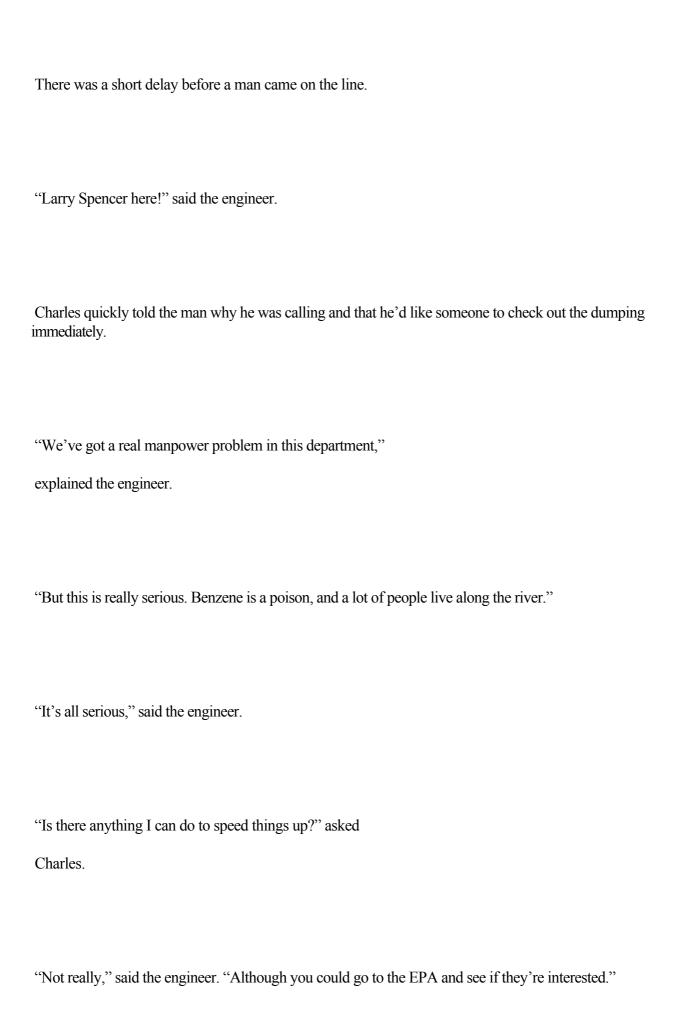
"Can I help you?" asked still another woman coming on the line.
"I certainly hope so," said Charles. "I'm calling to report that there is a factory regularly dumping benzene which is a poison."
"You'll have to call the proper state agency."
"What?" yelled Charles. "What the hell does the EPA do then?"
"We are a regulatory agency," said the woman calmly,  "tasked to regulate the environment."
"I would think that dumping a poison into a river would be something that would concern you."
"It very well could be," agreed the woman, "but only after the state had looked into it. Do you want the number for the proper state agency?"

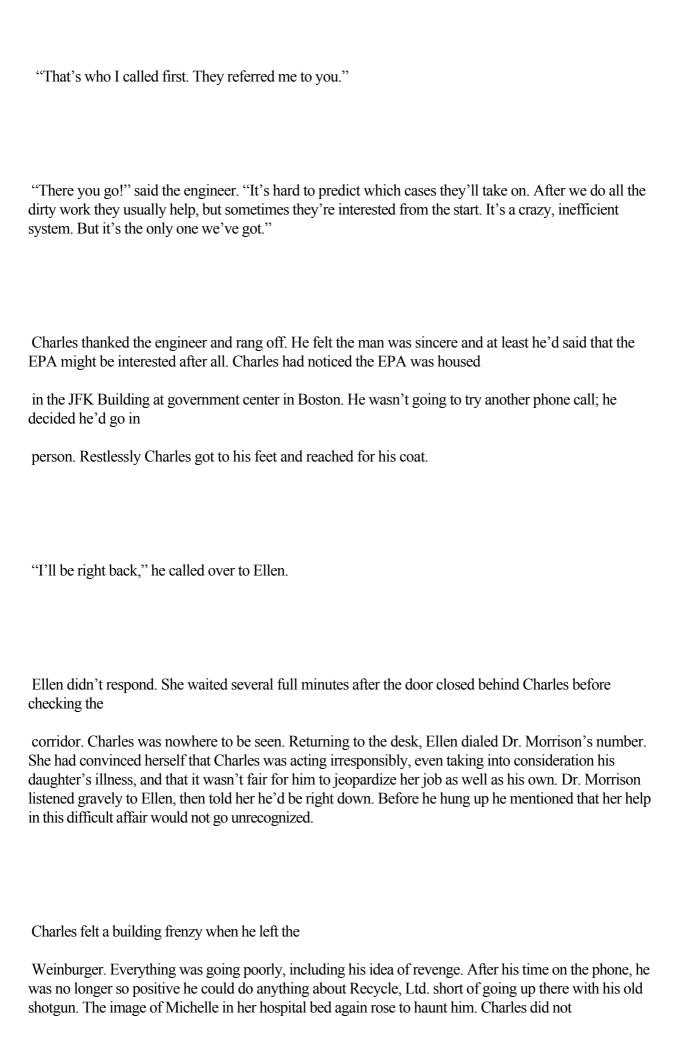


"But the river is mostly in Massachusetts."
"That might be," said the woman, "but the origin is in New Hampshire. You'll have to talk to them."
"Give me strength," muttered Charles.
"Excuse me?"
"Do you have their number?"
"No. You'll have to get it through Information."
The line went dead.
Charles called New Hampshire information and obtained the number to State Services. There was no listing for Water Pollution Control, but after calling the main number, Charles got the extension he wanted. Thinking that he was beginning to sound like a recording, he repeated his request once









know why he was so certain she was not going to respond to the chemotherapy. Maybe it was his crazy way of forcing himself to deal with the worst possible case, because he recognized that chemotherapy was her only hope. "If she has

to have leukemia," cried Charles shaking the Pinto's steering wheel, "why can't she have lymphocytic where chemotherapy is so successful."

Without realizing it, Charles had allowed his car to slow

below forty miles an hour, infuriating the other drivers on the road. There was a cacophony of horns, and as people passed him, they shook their fists.

After stashing his car in the municipal parking garage, Charles made his way up the vast bricked walk between the JFK Federal Building and the geometric City Hall. The buildings acted as a wind tunnel and Charles had to lean into the gusts to walk. The sun was weakly shining at that moment, but a

gray cloud bank was approaching from the west. The temperature was twenty-four degrees.

Charles pushed through the revolving door and searched for

a directory. To his left was an exhibition of John F. Kennedy photographs and straight ahead, next to the elevator, a makeshift coffee and donut concession had been set up.

Dusting Charles with a fine layer of confectioner's sugar as she spoke, one of the waitresses pointed out the

directory. It was hidden behind a series of smiling teenage photos of John F. Kennedy. The EPA was listed on the

twenty-third floor. Charles scrambled onto an elevator just before the door closed. Looking around at his fellow occupants, Charles wondered about the strange predominance of green polyester.

Charles got out on the twenty-third floor and made his way to an office marked DIRECTOR. That seemed like a good place to start.
Immediately inside the office was a large metal desk and typing stand dominated by an enormous woman whose hair was permed into a profusion of tight curls. A
rhinestone-encrusted cigarette holder, capped by a long, ultrathin cigarette, protruded jauntily from the corner of her mouth and competed for attention with her prodigious bosom that taxed the tensile strength of her dress. As Charles approached she adjusted the curls at her temples, viewing herself in a small hand mirror.
"Everyge me" said Charles avandering if this was one of
"Excuse me," said Charles, wondering if this was one of
the women he'd spoken to on the phone. "I'm here to report a recycling plant that's dumping benzene into a local river. Whom do I speak with?"
Continuing to pat her hair, the woman suspiciously examined Charles. "Is benzene a hazardous substance?" she demanded.
"Damn right it's hazardous," said Charles.
"I suppose you should go down to the Hazardous Materials Division on the nineteenth floor," said the woman with a tone that suggested "you ignorant slob."
After eight flights of stairs, Charles emerged on nineteen, which had a totally different atmosphere. All
except weight-bearing walls were removed, so that one could look from one end of the building to the other. The floor was filled with a maze of chest-height metal dividers separating the area into tiny cubicles. Above the scene hung a haze of cigarette smoke and the unintelligible murmur of hundreds of voices.

Charles entered the maze, noticing there were poles resembling street signs, describing the various departments. The Hazardous Materials Division was helpfully adjacent to the stairwell Charles had used, so he began to look at the signs delineating the subdivisions. He passed the Noise Program, the Air Program, the Pesticide Program, and the	
Radiation Program. Just beyond the Solid Waste Program he saw the Toxic Waste Program. He headed in that direction.	
Turning off the main corridor, Charles again confronted a desk serving as a kind of barrier to the interior. It was a much smaller desk and occupied by a slender black fellow who had apparently taken great effort to brush his naturally curly hair straight. To his credit, the man gave Charles his full attention. He was fastidiously dressed and when he spoke, he spoke with an accent almost English in its precision.	
"I'm afraid you're not in the right section," said the young man after hearing Charles's request.	
"Your division doesn't handle benzene?"	
"We handle benzene all right," said the man, "but we just handle the permits and licensing of hazardous materials."	
"Where do you suggest I go?" asked Charles, controlling himself.	

"Hmmm," said the man, putting a carefully manicured finger to the tip of his nose. "You know, I haven't the slightest idea. This has never come up. Wait, let me ask somebody else."
With a light, springy step, the young man stepped around the desk, smiled at Charles, and disappeared into the
interior of the maze. His shoes had metal taps and the sound carried back to Charles, distinct from the sounds of nearby typewriters. Charles fidgeted as he waited. He had the feeling his efforts were going to turn out to be totally in vain.
The young black came back.
"Nobody really knows where to go," he admitted. "But it
was suggested that perhaps you could try the Water Programs
Division on the twenty-second floor. Maybe they can help." Charles thanked the man, appreciating at least his willingness to help, and returned to the stairwell. With dampened enthusiasm but augmented anger, Charles climbed the six flights of stairs to the twenty-second floor. When he'd passed the twenty-first floor he'd had to skirt a group of three young men passing a joint among them. They'd eyed Charles with brazen arrogance.
The twenty-second floor was a mix of offices with normal plasterboard walls alternating with open areas containing chest-high dividers. At a nearby watercooler, Charles got directions to the Water Programs Division.
Charles found the receptionist's desk but it was empty. A smoldering cigarette suggested the occupant was in the vicinity but even after a short wait, no one materialized. Emboldened by exasperation, Charles stepped around the desk and entered the interior office space. Some of the cubicles were occupied with people on the phone or busy at a typewriter. Charles wandered until he came upon a man



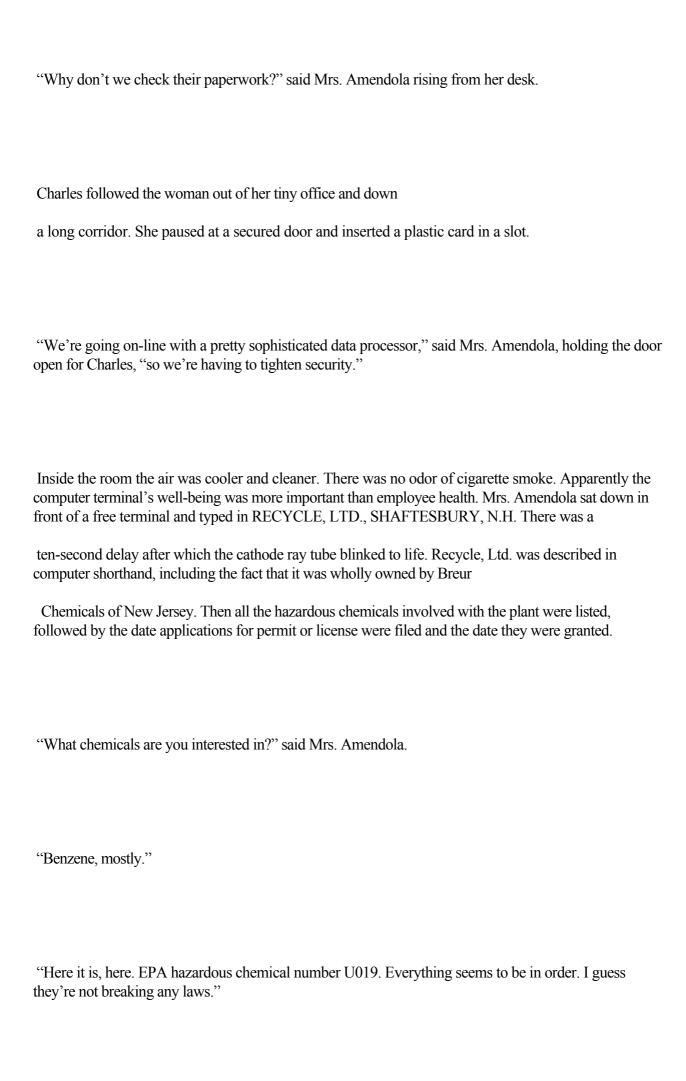


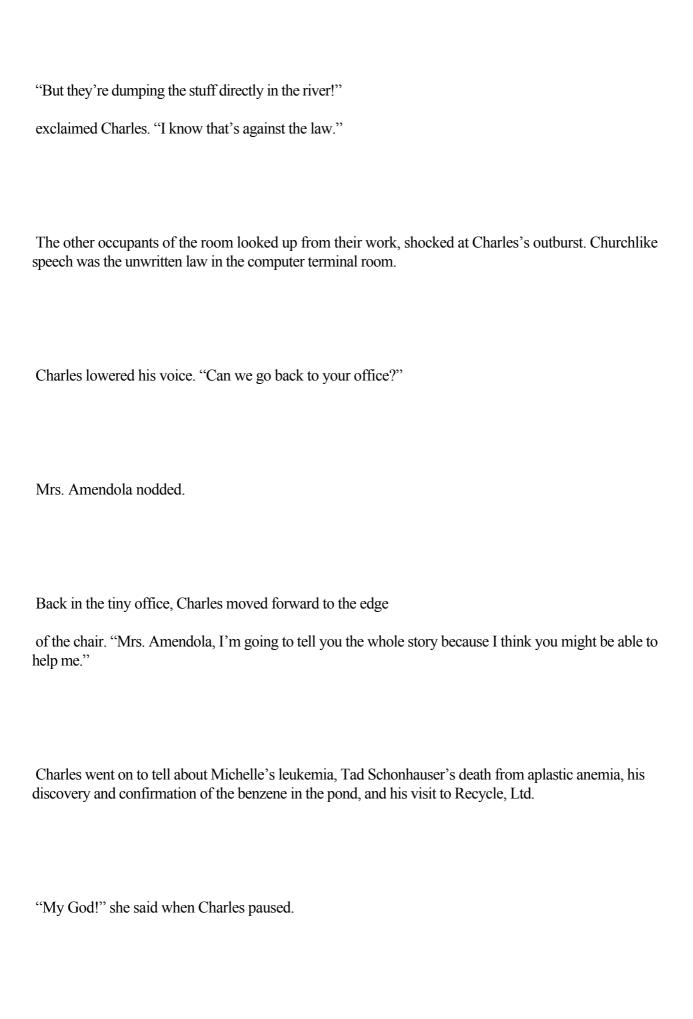


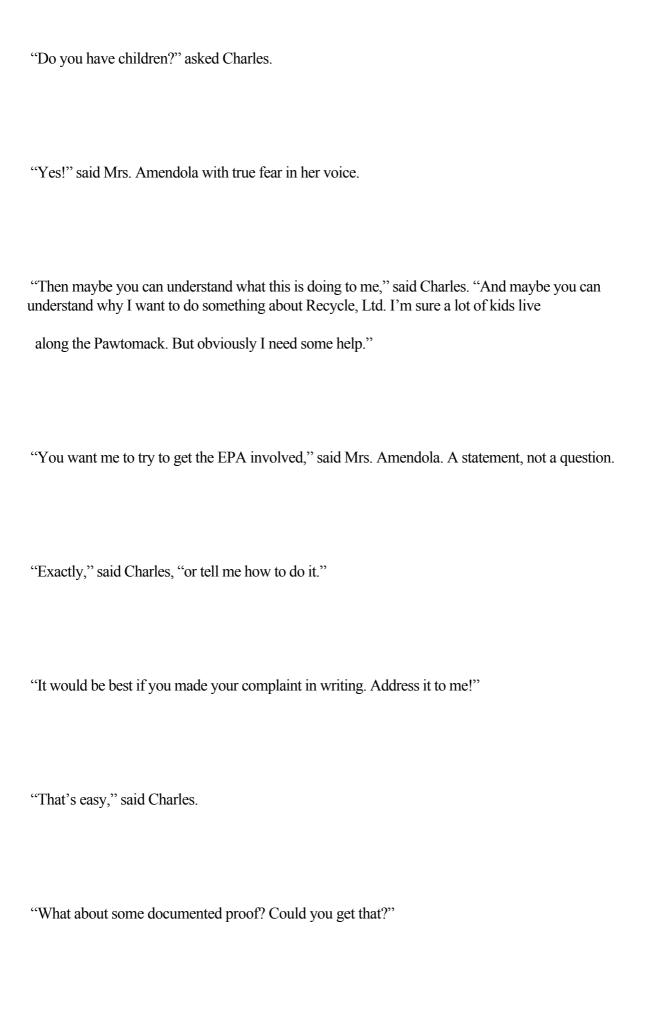
Charles drummed his fingers on the desk, resisting the temptation to reach over and give the girl a shake.
"All right," he said. "How about the next person in command who is here."
"Mrs. Amendola?" suggested the girl.
"I don't care what her name is."
Keeping a wary eye on Charles, the young woman got to her feet and disappeared.
When she reappeared, five minutes later, she had a concerned woman in tow who looked about thirty-five.
"I'm Mrs. Amendola, assistant supervisor here. Can I help you?"
"I certainly hope so," said Charles. "I'm Dr. Charles
Martel and I'm trying to report a factory that is dumping poisonous chemicals into a river. I have been sent from one department to another until someone suggested there was an Enforcement Division. But when I arrived here the receptionist was somewhat less than cooperative, so I demanded to speak to a supervisor."

"I told him that I didn't know anything about dumping chemicals," explained the young black girl.
Mrs. Amendola considered the situation for a moment, then invited Charles to follow her.
After passing a dozen cubicles, they entered a tiny and windowless office enlivened with travel posters. Mrs. Amendola motioned toward a lounge chair and squeezed herself behind the desk.
"You must understand," said Mrs. Amendola, "we don't have people walking in off the street with your kind of complaint. But of course, that doesn't excuse rudeness."
"What the hell do you people enforce if it's not fouling the environment," said Charles with hostility. After leading him to her office to placate him, Charles had the feeling that she was just going to refer him to another department.
"Our main job," explained the woman, "is to make sure that factories handling hazardous waste have filed for all the proper permits and licenses. It's a law that they do this and we enforce the law. Sometimes we have to take businesses to court and fine them."
Charles lowered his face into his hands and massaged his scalp. Apparently the absurdity that Mrs. Amendola was describing was not apparent to her.







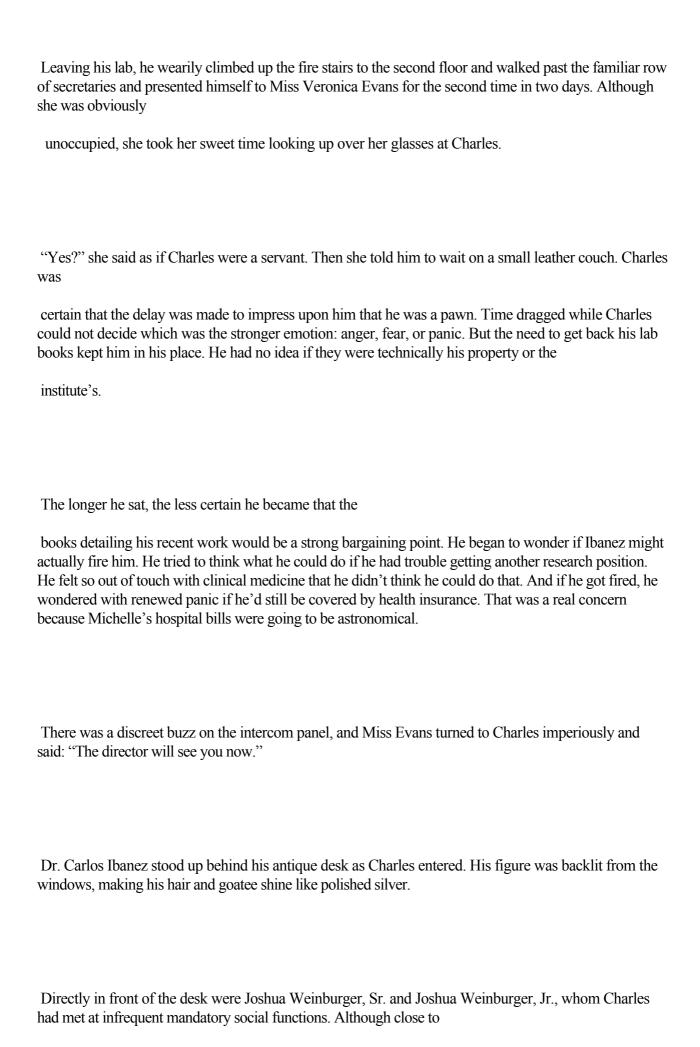






Rather than try to placate Charles, the man accused him of being one of those unpatriotic nuts whose stupid and
unfounded environmental concerns were responsible for putting American industry in a poor competitive position with companies overseas. The conversation degenerated into a shouting match about dumping benzene with Charles saying they were and the man saying they were not.
He slammed the phone down and spun around in a fury, looking for a way to vent his anger.
The door to the corridor opened and Ellen entered.
"Have you noticed?" asked Ellen with irritating nonchalance.
"Noticed what?" snapped Charles.
"All the lab books," said Ellen. "They're gone."
Charles leaped to his feet, scanning his desk, then the countertops.





eighty, the senior seemed more animated than the junior, with lively blue eyes. He regarded Charles with great interest.
Joshua Weinburger, Jr. was the stereotypical businessman, impeccably attired, obviously extremely reserved. He glanced at Charles with a mixture of disdain and boredom, switching his attention back to Dr. Ibanez almost immediately.
Seated to the right of the desk was Dr. Morrison, whose dress mirrored Joshua Weinburger, Jr.'s in its attention to  detail. A silk handkerchief, which had been carefully folded, then casually flared, protruded from his breast pocket.
"Come in, come in!" commanded Dr. Ibanez good-naturedly. Charles approached Dr. Ibanez's huge desk, noticing the conspicuous lack of a fourth chair. He ended up standing between the Weinburgers and Morrison. Charles didn't know
what to do with his hands, so he stuck them into his pockets. He looked out of place among these businessman with his
frayed oxford-cloth shirt, his wide out-of-style tie, and poorly pressed slacks.
"I think we should get right to business," said Dr. Ibanez. "The Weinburgers, as co-chairmen of the board of
directors, have graciously come to help us manage the current crisis."
"Indeed," said Weinburger, Jr., turning slightly in his chair so as to look up at Charles. He had a tremor
of his head and it rotated rapidly in a short arc to and fro. "Dr. Martel, it's not the policy of the board of directors to

interfere in the creative process of research. However, there are occasionally circumstances in which we must violate this rule and the current crisis is such a time. I think you

should know that Canceran is a potentially important drug for Lesley Pharmaceuticals. To be very blunt, Lesley Pharmaceuticals is in precarious financial condition. Within the last few years, their patents have run out on their line of antibiotics and tranquilizers, and they are in desperate need of a new drug to market. They have committed their

scarce resources into developing a chemotherapy line, and Canceran is the product of that research. They hold the exclusive patent on Canceran but must get the drug on the market. The sooner the better."

Charles studied the faces of the men. Obviously they weren't going to dismiss him summarily. The idea was to

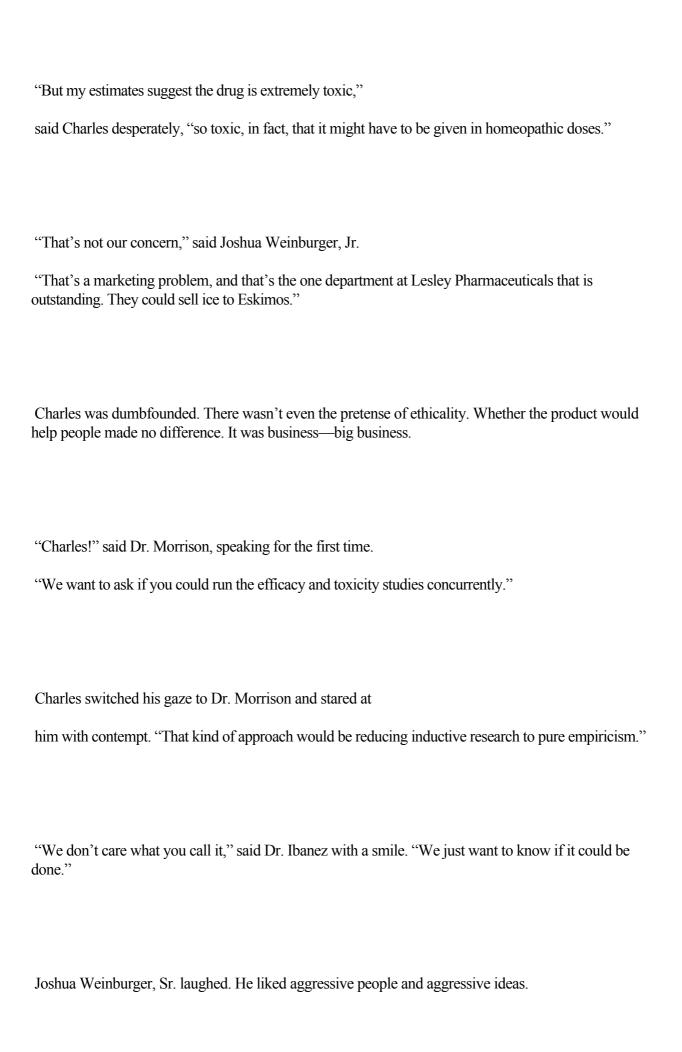
soften him up, make him understand the financial realities, then convince him to recommence work on Canceran. He had a glimmer of hope. The Weinburgers couldn't have risen to their positions of power without intelligence, and Charles began to formulate in his mind the way he would convince them that Canceran was a bad investment, that it was a toxic drug and

would probably never be marketed.

"We already know what you discovered about the toxicity of Canceran," said Dr. Ibanez, taking a short puff on his cigar and unknowingly undermining Charles. "We realize that Dr. Brighton's estimates are not entirely accurate."

"That's a generous way of putting it," said Charles, realizing with dismay that his trump card had been snatched from him. "Apparently all the data in the Canceran studies done by Dr. Brighton has been falsified." He watched the reaction of the Weinburgers out of the corners of his eyes, hoping for a response but seeing none.

"Most unfortunate," agreed Dr. Ibanez. "The solution is salvaging what we can and going forward."





"I'd say that is very generous," said Dr. Ibanez. "But you don't have to decide right this moment. In fact, we have agreed to give you twenty-four hours. We don't want you to feel coerced. But just so you know, we will be making preliminary inquiries into finding your replacement. Until then, Dr. Charles Martel."

With disgust, Charles whirled and headed for the door. As

he reached it, Dr. Ibanez called out: "One other thing. The board of directors and the administration want to convey their condolences regarding your daughter. We hope she

recovers quickly. The Institute health plan, by the way, only holds while you are actively employed. Good day, doctor."

Charles wanted to scream. Instead he ran the length of the administrative department and thundered down the metal fire stairs to his office, but once there, he didn't know whether he wanted to stay. For the first time he felt that being part of the Weinburger Institute was a disgrace. He hated the fact that they even knew about Michelle. On top of that they were using Michelle's illness as leverage against him. It was an outrage. God!

He looked around his laboratory, his home for the last

eight years. He felt as if he knew every piece of glassware, each instrument, every bottle of reagent. It didn't seem fair that he could be rudely plucked from this environment at

whim, especially now that he was making such progress. His eye fell on the culture he'd set up with Michelle's leukemia cells. With great effort he went over to the

incubator, peering in at the rows of carefully arranged glass tubes. It appeared to be progressing well, and Charles felt a much-needed sense of satisfaction. As far as he could tell, his progress of isolating and augmenting a cancer antigen seemed to work as well with human cells as it did with animal cells. Since it was already time for the next step, Charles rolled up his sleeves and tucked his tie inside his shirt. Work was Charles's anesthetic and he bent to the task. After all, he had twenty-four hours before he'd have to bow to the demands of the administration. He knew but did not want to admit to himself that he had to give in for Michelle's sake. He really had no choice.

## **NINE**

Coming back from Beth Israel Hospital where she'd paid an unsuccessful visit to Marge Schonhauser, Cathryn felt she was being stretched to the limits of her endurance. She'd guessed that Marge must have been bad off or she wouldn't have been hospitalized, but she was still not prepared for what she found. Apparently some vital thread had snapped in Marge's brain when Tad had died, because she had sunk into an unresponsive torpor, refusing to eat or even sleep. Cathryn had sat with Marge in silence until a feeling of tension

drove Cathryn away. It was as if Marge's depression were

infectious. Cathryn fled back to Pediatric Hospital, going from the casualty of one tragedy to the beginning of another.

Rising in the crowded elevator to Anderson 6, she wondered if what happened to Marge could happen to her or even to Charles. He was a physician and she would have guessed he'd

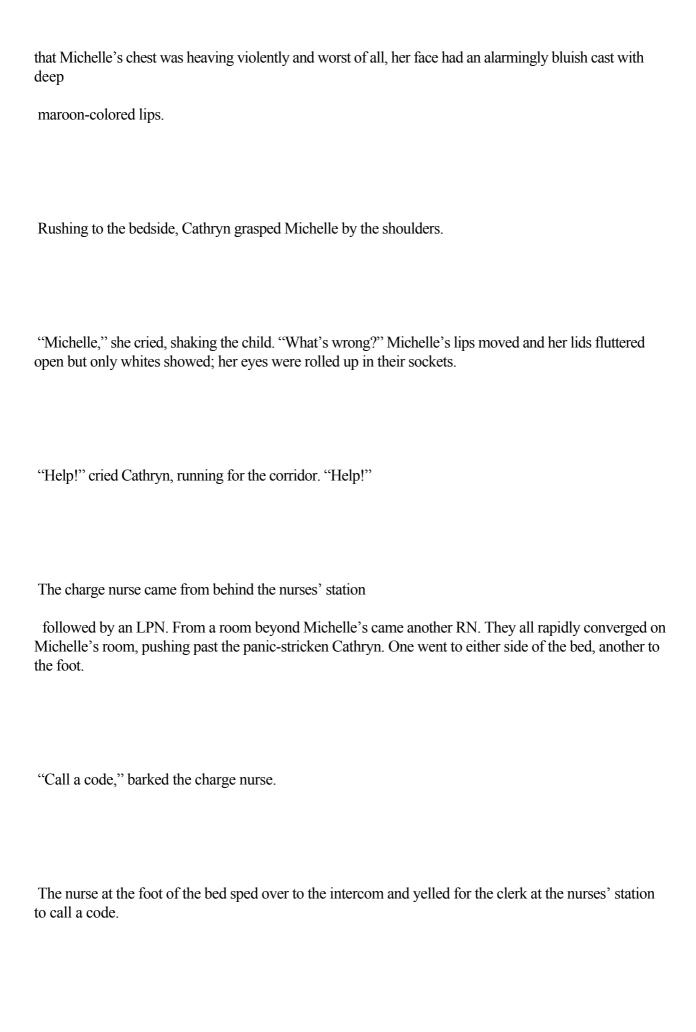
be more capable of dealing with this kind of reality, yet his behavior was far from reassuring. As difficult as she found hospitals and illness, Cathryn tried to gird herself against the future.

The elevator arrived at Anderson 6 and Cathryn struggled to reach the front of the car before the doors closed. She

was impatient to get back to Michelle, because the child had been very reluctant to let Cathryn leave. Cathryn had talked Michelle into letting her go after lunch by promising she'd be back in half an hour. Unfortunately it was now closer to an hour.

Michelle had clung to Cathryn earlier that morning after Charles had left, insisting that Charles was angry with her. No matter what Cathryn had said, she'd not been able to change Michelle's mind.

Now Cathryn pushed open Michelle's door, hoping the child might be napping. At first she thought perhaps she was, because Michelle didn't move. But then Cathryn noticed the child had kicked off the covers and slid down in the bed with one leg tucked under her. From the doorway Cathryn could see



Meanwhile the charge nurse could feel a rapid, thready
pulse. "Feels like V-tack," she said. "Her heart's beating so fast it's hard to feel individual beats."
"I agree," said the other nurse, putting the blood pressure cuff around Michelle's arm.
"She's breathing but cyanotic," said the charge nurse.
"Should I give her mouth-to-mouth?"
"I don't know," said the second nurse, pumping up the blood pressure cuff. "Maybe it would help the cyanosis."
The third nurse came back to the bed and straightened out Michelle's leg while the charge nurse bent over and, squeezing Michelle's nose shut, placed her mouth over Michelle's and blew.
"I can get a blood pressure," said the second nurse.
"Sixty over forty, but it's variable."
The charge nurse continued to breathe for Michelle but Michelle's own rapid respiration made it difficult. The nurse straightened up. "I think I'm hindering her more than helping her. I'd better hold off."

Cathryn remained pressed against the wall, terrorized by
the scene in front of her, afraid to move lest she be in the way. She had no idea what was happening although she knew it was bad. Where was Charles!
A woman resident was the first doctor to arrive. She came through from the hallway so quickly that she had to grab the
edge of the door to keep from falling on the polished vinyl floor. She ran directly to the bedside, grasping Michelle's wrist for a pulse.
"I think she has V-tack," said the charge nurse. "She's a leukemic. Myeloblastic. Day two of attempted induction."
"Any cardiac history?" demanded the woman resident, as she leaned over and elevated Michelle's eyelids. "At least the pupils are down."
The three nurses looked at each other. "We don't think she has any cardiac history. Nothing was said at report," said the charge nurse.
"Blood pressure?" asked the resident.
"Last time it was sixty over forty but variable," said the second nurse.

"V-tack," confirmed the woman resident. "Stand back a second."
The woman resident made a fist and brought it down on Michelle's narrow thorax with a resounding thump that made Cathryn wince.
An extremely young-looking chief resident arrived followed
by two others pushing a cart filled with all sorts of medical paraphernalia and crowned with electronic instrumentation.
The woman resident gave a terse explanation of Michelle's condition while the nurses rapidly attached EKG leads to Michelle's extremities.
The charge nurse leaned over to one of the other nurses and told her to page Dr. Keitzman.
The electronic box on the top of the cart began to spew
forth an endless strip of narrow graph paper on which Cathryn could see the red squiggles of an EKG. The doctors grouped around the machine, momentarily forgetting Michelle.
"V-tack all right," said the chief resident. "With the dyspnea and cyanosis she's obviously hemodynamically compromised. What does that mean, George?"

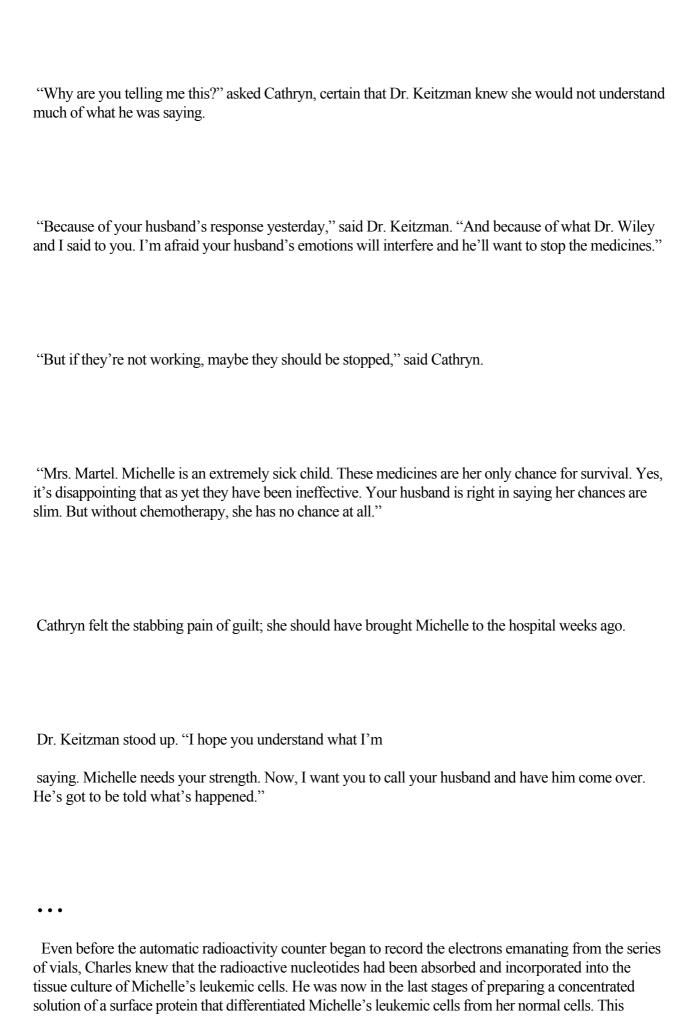
One of the other residents looked up, startled. "Means we should cardiovert her immedithink."	iately I
"You think right," concurred the chief resident. "But let's draw up some Lidocaine. Let' about fifty kilograms, no?"	s see, the kid's
"A little less," said the woman resident.	
"All right, fifty milligrams of Lidocaine. Also draw up a milligram of atropine in case she bradycardia."	goes into
The team functioned efficiently as one resident drew up	
the medications, another got out the electrode paddles, while the third helped position M paddle went under Michelle's back, the other anteriorly on her chest.	ichelle. One
"All right, stand back," said the chief resident. "We'll use a fifty-watt second shock to st programmed to be delivered at the R-wave. Here goes."	art,
He pressed a button and after a momentary delay Michelle's body contracted, her arms jumping off the surface of the bed.	and legs

Cathryn watched in horror as the doctors stayed bent over the machine, ignoring Michelle's violent reaction. Cathryn
could see the child's eyes open in utter bewilderment and her head lift off the bed. Thankfully her color rapidly reverted to normal.
"Not bad!" yelled the chief resident, examining the EKG
paper as it came out of the machine.
"John, you're getting good at this stuff," agreed the
woman resident. "Maybe you should think about doing it for a living."
All the doctors laughed and turned to Michelle.
Dr. Keitzman arrived breathless, hands jammed into the
pockets of his long white coat. He went directly to the bed, his bespectacled eyes quickly scanning Michelle's body. He snatched up her hand, feeling for a pulse.
"Are you okay, chicken?" he asked, getting out his stethoscope.
Michelle nodded but didn't speak. She appeared dazed. Cathryn watched as John, the chief resident, launched into a capsule summary of the event in what was to Cathryn incomprehensible medicalese.

Dr. Keitzman's upper lip pulled back in a characteristic spasm as he bent over Michelle, listening to her chest. Satisfied, he checked a run of EKG paper offered by John. At that moment he caught sight of Cathryn pressed up against the wall. Keitzman glanced at the charge nurse with a questioning expression. The charge nurse, following his line of sight, shrugged.
"We didn't know she was in here," said the charge nurse defensively.
Dr. Keitzman walked over to Cathryn and put a hand on her shoulder.
"How about you, Mrs. Martel?" asked Dr. Keitzman. "Are you all right?"
Cathryn tried to talk but her voice wouldn't cooperate, so she nodded like Michelle.
"I'm sorry you had to see this," said Dr. Keitzman.  "Michelle seems fine and she undoubtedly did not feel anything. But I know this kind of thing is shocking. Let's go out in the hall for a moment. I'd like to talk to you."
Cathryn strained upward to see Michelle over Dr. Keitzman's shoulder.

"She'll be okay for a moment," assured Dr. Keitzman. Then, turning to the charge nurse, he said, "I'll be just outside. I want a cardiac monitor in here, and I'd like a cardiac consult. See if Dr. Brubaker can see her right away." Dr. Keitzman gently urged Cathryn out into the corridor. "Come down to the nurses' station; we can talk there."
Dr. Keitzman led Cathryn down the busy corridor to the chart room. There were Formica Parsons tables, chairs, two dictating telephones, and the massive chart racks. Dr. Keitzman pulled out a chair for Cathryn and she gratefully sat down.
"Can I get you something to drink?" suggested Dr. Keitzman. "Water?"
"No, thank you," managed Cathryn nervously. Dr. Keitzman's extremely serious manner was a source of new anxiety and she searched the man's face for clues. It was hard to see his eyes through his thick glasses.
The charge nurse's head came through the door. "Dr. Brubaker wants to know if he can see the patient in his office."
Dr. Keitzman's face contorted for a second while he pondered. "Tell him that she just had an episode of V-tack and I'd prefer he see her before she's moved around."
"Okay," said the charge nurse.

	Dr. Keitzman turned to Cathryn. He sighed. "Mrs. Martel, I feel I must talk frankly with you. Michelle is not doing well at all. And I'm not referring specifically to this latest episode."
	"What was this episode?" asked Cathryn, not liking the initial tone of the conversation.
	"Her heart speeded up," said Dr. Keitzman. "Usually it's the upper part of the heart that initiates the beat." Dr.
]	Keitzman gestured awkwardly to try to illustrate what he was saying. "But for some reason, the lower part of Michelle's heart took over. Why? We don't know yet. In any case, her heart suddenly began to beat so fast that there wasn't time for the heart to fill properly, so it pumped inefficiently. But that seems to be under control. What is worrying me is
	that she does not seem to be responding to the chemotherapy."
	"But she's just started!" exclaimed Cathryn. The last
	thing that Cathryn wanted was for her hope to be undermined.
1	"That's true," agreed Dr. Keitzman. "However, Michelle's type of leukemia usually responds in the first few days. On top of that Michelle has the most aggressive case that I've ever seen. Yesterday we gave her a very strong and very
	successful drug called Daunorubicin. This morning when we did her blood count, I was shocked to see that there was almost no effect on the leukemic cells. This is very unusual
9	although it does happen occasionally. So I decided to try something a little different. Usually we give a second dose of this medicine on the fifth day. Instead I gave her another dose today along with the Thioguanine and Cytarabine."



protein was foreign to Michelle's body but was not rejected because of the mysterious blocking factor that Charles knew was in Michelle's system. It was this blocking factor that Charles had wanted to investigate. If only he knew something about the method of action of the blocking factor, perhaps it could be inhibited or eliminated. He was frustrated to be so close to a solution and have to stop. At the same time he realized that it was probably a five-year project with no guarantee of success.

Closing the cover on the tissue culture incubator, he walked to his desk, vaguely wondering why Ellen had not appeared. He wanted to discuss the Canceran project with

someone knowledgeable, and she was the only person he could trust.

He sat down, trying not to think about the recent humiliating meeting with Dr. Ibanez and the Weinburgers.

Instead he recalled the frustrating visit to the EPA offices that didn't make him feel much better. Yet he could laugh at his own naiveté in thinking that he could walk into a government agency and expect to accomplish something. He wondered if there would be any way that he could get some sort of photographic proof of Recycle's dumping. It was doubtful, but he'd try.

Perhaps if he were responsible for getting the evidence, he should sue Recycle directly rather than waiting for the EPA to do so. Charles knew very little about law, but he

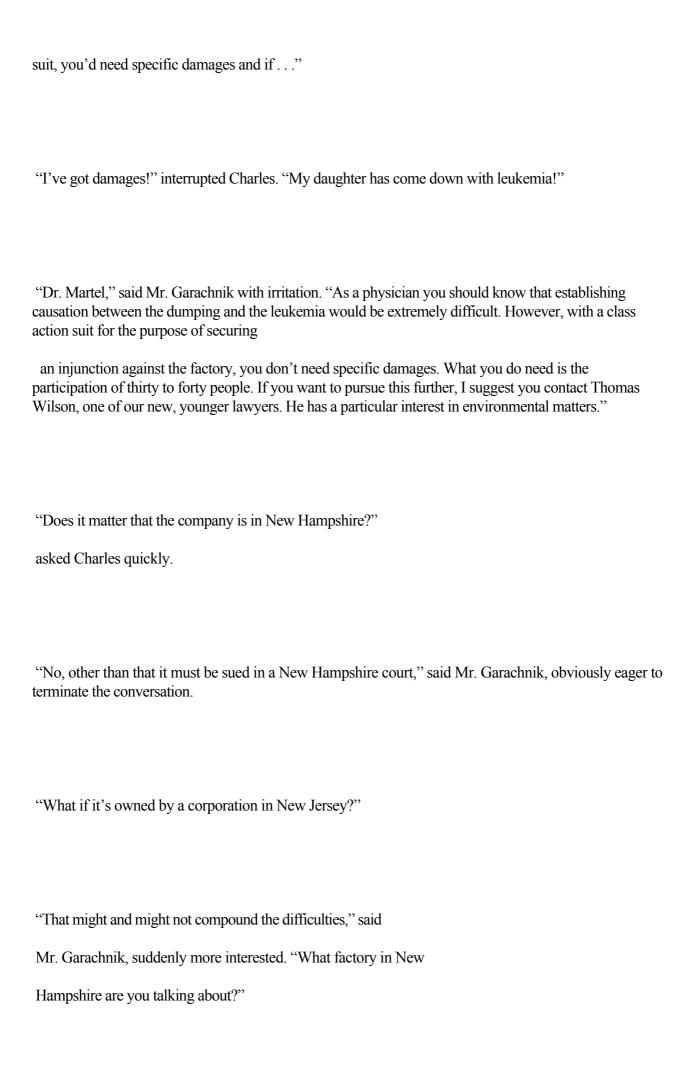
remembered there was a source of information open to him. The

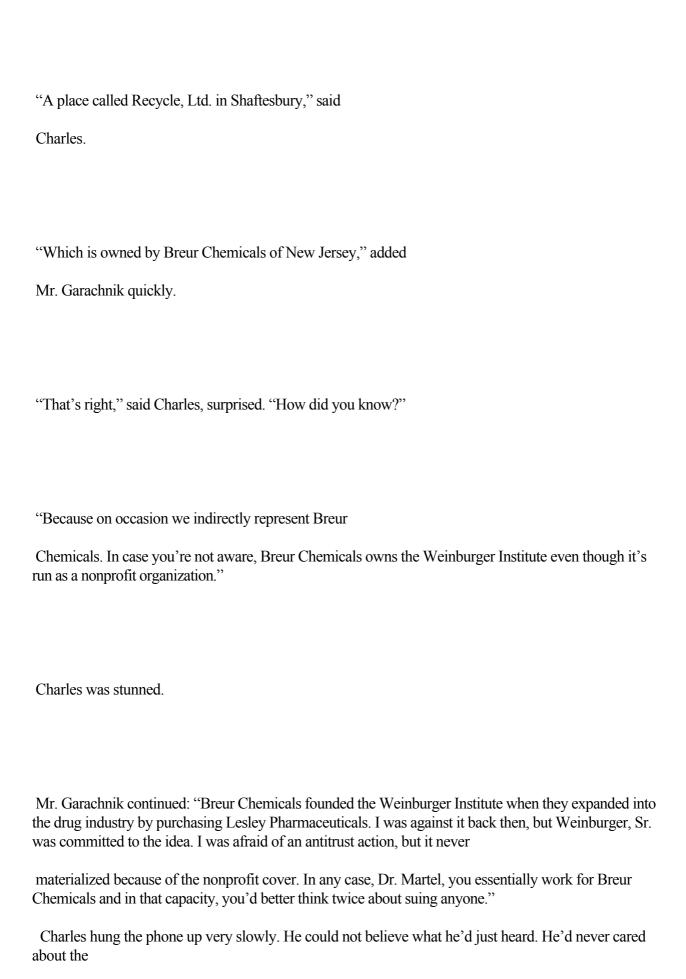
Weinburger Institute law firm on retainer.

The left lower drawer was Charles's spot for miscellaneous pamphlets. Close to the bottom he found what he was looking for: a skinny red booklet entitled Welcome Aboard: This Is Your Weinburger Cancer Institute. In the back was a list of

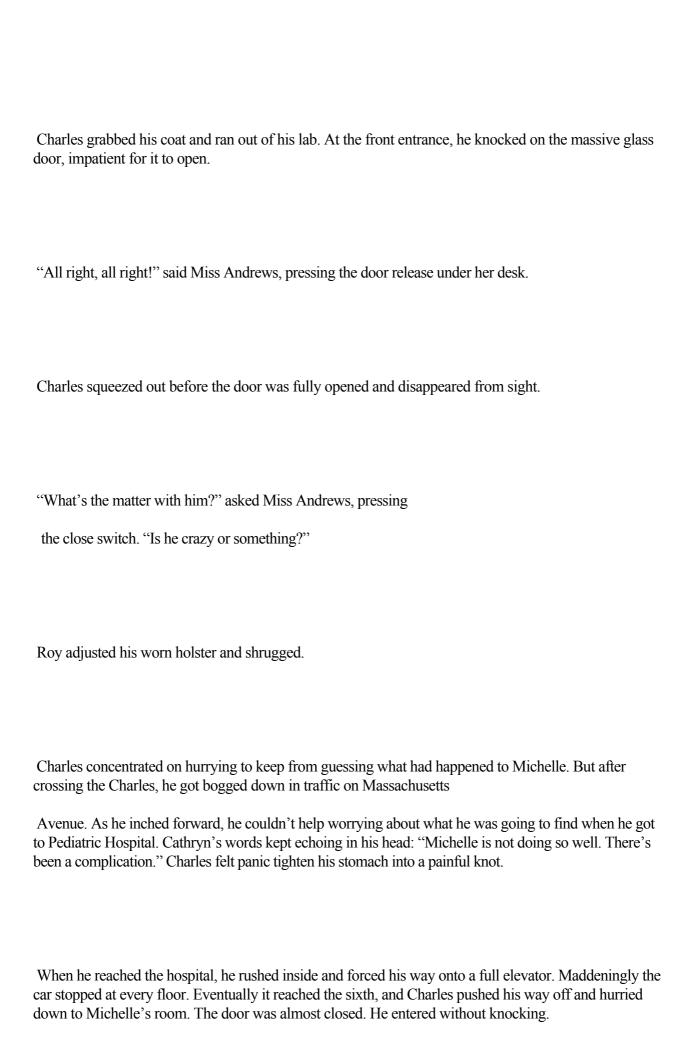
important phone numbers. Under services was Hubbert, Hubbert, Garachnik and Pearson, 1 State Street, followed by several phone numbers. He dialed the first.







mancial side of the institute except to the extent that the
Weinburger could supply him with research space and equipment. But now he learned that he was working for a conglomerate which was ultimately responsible for dumping
cancer-causing waste into a public river as well as running a research institute supposedly interested in curing cancer. As for Canceran, the parent company controlled both the drug
firm holding the patents and the research firm chosen to ascertain its efficiency.
No wonder Weinburger was so interested in Canceran!
The phone jangled Charles's taut nerves as it rang under
his outstretched hand. As the source of the recent dreadful revelation, Charles debated answering it. Undoubtedly it was the administration calling, bent on harassing him with more pressure and more deceit.
Abruptly Charles's mind switched to Michelle. The call could be about his daughter. He snatched the receiver from the cradle and pressed it to his ear.
He was right. It was Cathryn and her voice had the same stiff quality it had the day before. His heart jumped into his throat.
"Is everything okay?"
"Michelle is not doing so well. There's been a complication. You'd better come over."



An elegant blond-haired woman straightened up from leaning over Michelle. She'd been listening to the girl's heart

before Charles's entry. On the opposite side of the bed was a young resident dressed in hospital whites.

Charles gave the woman a cursory glance and looked down at his daughter with empathy submerging all other emotions. He wanted to grab her and shield her, but he was afraid she had become too fragile. His trained eyes inspected her rapidly and could detect a worsening in her condition since that morning. There was a greenish cast to her face, a change Charles had associated during his medical training with ensuing death. Her cheeks had become hollow with the skin taut over her facial bones. Despite an intravenous line attached to both arms, she looked dehydrated from the vomiting and high fever.

"Michelle," said Charles softly, bending down so his face was close to hers. "How do you feel?" He didn't know what else to say.

Michelle, lying flat on her back, looked up at her father with tired eyes. Despite her discomfort she managed a weak smile and for a brief moment her eyes shone with the incredible luster that Charles

Michelle's eyes clouded and she began to cry. "I want to

remembered.

go home, Daddy." She was reluctant to admit how bad she felt.

Biting his lip Charles glanced up at the woman next to

him, embarrassed by his overwhelming emotion. Looking back down at Michelle, he put his hand on her forehead and smoothed back her thick black hair. Her forehead was hot and damp. Her fever had risen. Michelle reached up and grasped his hand.



But I'd like to finish my exam, if I may. Dr. Keitzman and your wife are in the chart room at the nurses' station. I understand they are waiting for you."
Charles lowered his eyes to Michelle. "I'll be right back, sweetheart."
"Don't go, Daddy," pleaded Michelle. "Stay with me."
"I won't go far," said Charles, gently loosing Michelle's grip. He was preoccupied by Dr. Brubaker's statement that Michelle had received a double dose of Daunorubicin. That sounded irregular.
Cathryn saw Charles before he saw her and leaped to her feet, throwing her arms around his neck.
"Charles, I'm so glad you're here." She buried her face in his neck. "This is so difficult for me to handle."
Holding Cathryn, Charles glanced around the small chart room. Dr. Wiley was leaning against the table, his eyes on the floor. Dr. Keitzman was sitting opposite from him, his legs crossed, and his hands clasped together over his knee. He appeared to be examining the fabric of his slacks. No one spoke, but Charles felt nervous, his eyes darting from one doctor to the other. The scene seemed too artificial, too staged. Something was coming and Charles hated the theatrics.
"All right," said Charles challengingly. "What's happening?"







Abruptly Charles turned and strode from the room. Cathryn ran after him. "Charles. Where are you going? Charles, don't go! Please. Don't leave me."
At the stair he finally turned, gripping Cathryn's shoulders. "I can't think here. I don't know what's right.
Each alternative is as bad as another. I've been through this before. Familiarity doesn't make it easier. I've got to pull myself together. I'm sorry."
With a feeling of helplessness Cathryn watched him go through the door and disappear. She was alone in the busy corridor. She knew that if she had to, she could handle the situation even if Charles couldn't. She had to, for Michelle's sake. She walked back to the chart room.
"The strange thing," said Cathryn with a tremulous voice,
"is that you two anticipated all this."
"Unfortunately we've had some experience with families of physicians," said Dr. Keitzman. "It's always difficult."
"But it's usually not this difficult," added Dr. Wiley.
"We were talking while you were gone," said Dr. Keitzman.
"We feel that something must be done to ensure continuity of
Michelle's care."









Cathryn was swept by a turmoil of emotion. The idea that

she was capable of going between Charles, the man she loved, and his daughter, whom she'd learned to love, was unthinkable. And yet if the strain was too much for Charles, and he interrupted Michelle's treatment, she would have to share the blame for not having the courage to help the child's doctors.

"If I were to do as you ask," said Cathryn, "what would be the procedure?"

"Hold on," said Dr. Keitzman, reaching for the phone. "I

think the hospital attorney could answer that better than I."

Almost before Cathryn knew what was happening, the meeting with the hospital attorney was over, and Cathryn was hurrying after the man in the Boston courthouse. His name was Patrick Murphy. He had freckled skin and indeterminate light brown hair that could have been red at one time. But by far his

most distinguishing characteristic was his personality. He was one of those rare people whom everyone instantly liked, and Cathryn was no exception. Even in her distraught state, she had been charmed by his gentle and forthright manner and engaging smile.

Cathryn was not sure when the conversation with the

attorney had changed from discussing a hypothetical situation to discussing an actual one. Making the decision to petition for legal guardianship for Michelle behind Charles's back was so difficult that Cathryn had welcomed its accomplishment by default. Patrick had assured Cathryn, as had Dr. Keitzman, that the legal powers would not be used except in the

unlikely instance that Charles tried to stop Michelle's treatment.

Still Cathryn felt very uneasy about the whole affair, especially since she had not had time to see Michelle in the rush to get to the court before the 4 P.M. deadline.

"This way if you will," said Patrick, pointing to a narrow stairwell. Cathryn had never been in a courthouse before, and it was nothing like she'd imagined. She'd thought it would be grand in some symbolic way, standing as it did for the

concept of justice. Yet the Boston courthouse, which was actually over one hundred years old, was dirty and depressing, especially since, for security reasons, the public was forced to enter through the basement.

After ascending the narrow steel stairs, which Cathryn

could not believe served as the sole public entrance to the

court, they reached the old main hall. Here there was at least a shadow of former grandness with an arched two-story ceiling; marble pilasters and marble floors. But the plaster was chipped and cracked, and the elaborate moldings gave the appearance they were about to break free and fall to the floor below.

Cathryn had to run a few steps to catch up with Patrick as he turned into the Probate Court. It was a long, narrow room with a heavy, dusty appearance, especially with the hundreds of aged ledgers sitting sideways on their low shelves to the right. On the left was a long scuffed and pitted counter where a coterie of court employees seemed suddenly roused from their diurnal slumber at the prospect of quitting time.

As Cathryn surveyed the room she did not feel the confidence and reassurance she'd hoped. Instead its

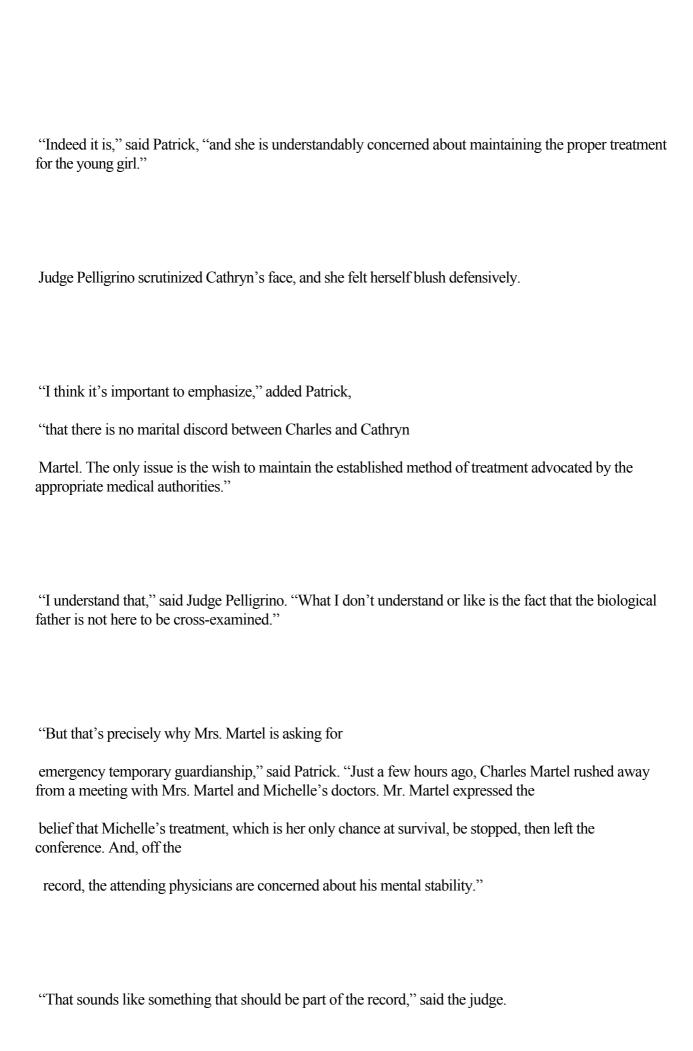
shabbiness evoked images of being snared in a quagmire of red tape. Yet Patrick did not allow Cathryn to stop. He pulled

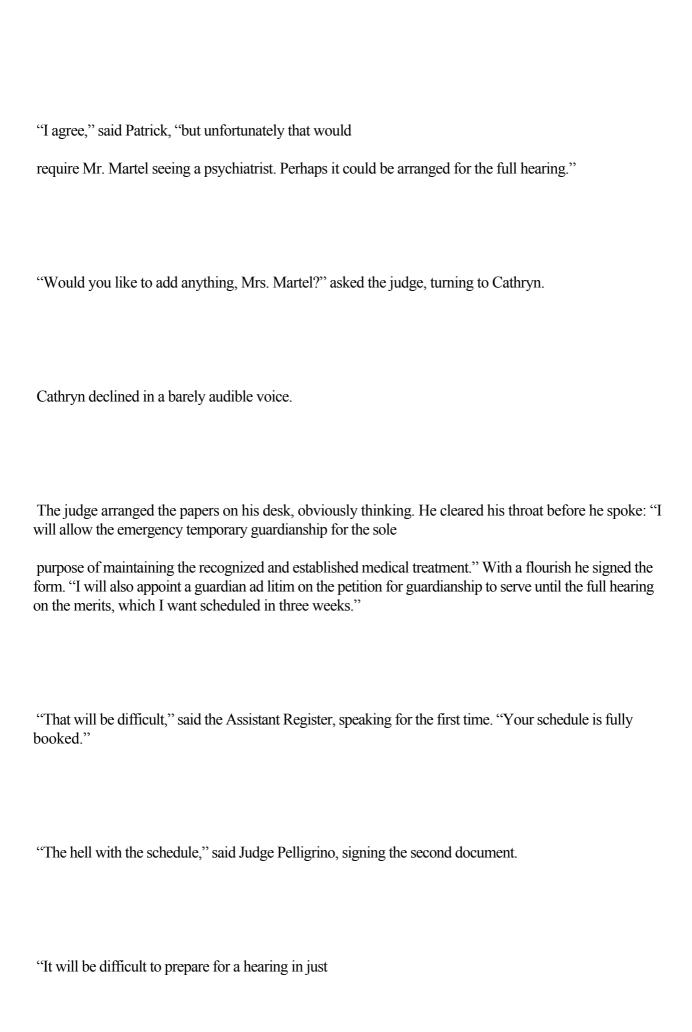
her over to a smaller counter at the end of the room.

"I'd like to speak to one of the Assistant Registers of Probate," said Patrick to one of the bored clerks. She had a cigarette in the corner of her mouth, making her cock her head to the side to keep the smoke from stinging her eyes. She pointed to a man facing away from them.
Hearing the request, the man turned; he was on the phone but put up a finger for them to wait. After finishing his conversation, he came over to Cathryn and Patrick. He was tremendously overweight, a middle-aged man with a thick,  flaccid layer of fat that shook when he walked. His face was all jowls, wattles, and deep creases.
"We have an emergency," explained Patrick. "We'd like to see one of the judges."
"Hospital guardianship case, Mr. Murphy?" questioned the Assistant Register knowingly.
"That's correct," said Patrick. "All the forms are filled out."
"Must say, you fellows are getting efficient," said the man. He looked up at the face of the institutional clock. "My God, you're cutting it close. It's almost four. I'd better check to be sure Judge Pelligrino is still here."

He waddled through a nearby doorway, his arms swinging almost perpendicularly to his body.	
"Glandular problem," whispered Patrick. He put his briefcase on the counter and snapped it open.	
Cathryn looked at the attractive young lawyer. He was dressed in the typical attorney fashion with a boxy, Ivy League, pin-striped suit. The slacks were slightly rumpled,	
particularly behind the knees, and they were about two inches too short, exposing black-socked ank With great attentiveness, he arranged the forms which Cathryn had	les
signed.	
"Do you really think I should do this?" asked Cathryn abruptly.	
"Absolutely," said Patrick, giving her one of his warm, spontaneous smiles. "It's for the child."	
Five minutes later they were in the judge's chamber, and it was too late to turn back.	
As different as the Boston courthouse was from Cathryn's imagination, so was Judge Louis Pelligring Instead of an older, gowned, Socratic figure, Cathryn found herself sitting across from a disturbingly handsome man wearing a	).
well-tailored designer's suit. After donning stylish reading glasses, he accepted the papers from Patrisaying, "Jesus Christ, Mr. Murphy. Why is it you always show up at four o'clock?"	ck

"Medical emergencies, your honor, adhere to a biological rather than a probate clock."
Judge Pelligrino peered at Patrick sharply over his
half-glasses, apparently trying to decide if Patrick's retort was clever or presumptuously brazen. A slow smile appeared as he decided on the former. "Very good, Mr. Murphy. I'll accept that. Now, why don't you fill me in on these petitions."
As Patrick skillfully outlined the circumstances surrounding Michelle's illness and treatment as well as Charles's behavior, Judge Pelligrino examined the forms,
seemingly not paying attention to the young lawyer. But when Patrick made an insignificant grammatical error, the judge's head shot up, and he corrected him.
"Where are the affidavits by Doctors Wiley and Keitzman?"
asked Judge Pelligrino as Patrick finished.
The lawyer leaned forward and anxiously thumbed through the papers in the judge's hands. He snapped open his
briefcase, and with great relief found the two documents and handed them over with an apology.
The judge read them in detail.
"And this is the adopted mother, I presume," said Judge
Pelligrino, capturing Cathryn's attention.







"But Charles is going to find out what I've done," cried

Cathryn. "You didn't tell me that. My God!"

## **TEN**

Although the sun had set on schedule at four-thirty, no

one in New England had seen it go down, including Charles, who was parking at the base of Main Street in Shaftesbury at the time. A heavy bank of clouds had moved in from the Great Lakes. The New England meteorologists were trying to decide when the front was going to collide with a flow of warm air from the Gulf of Mexico. They all agreed it was going to snow, but no one could decide how much or when.

By five-thirty, Charles was still sitting behind the steering wheel of the Pinto parked in the lee of the row of

deserted old mill buildings. Every so often he'd scrape off a bit of the frost on the inside of the windshield and peer

out. He was waiting until it was completely dark. To keep

warm he started the engine every quarter hour and let it idle for five minutes. Just after six he was satisfied that the

sky was a uniformly dark blanket and he opened the door and got out.

Recycle, Ltd. was about two hundred yards ahead as

evidenced mainly by the single light they had near the office door. It had started to snow with large flakes that settled like feathers in short swooping arcs.

Charles opened the trunk and collected his gear: a

Polaroid camera, a flashlight, and a few sample jars. Then he crossed the snow to the shadow of the

empty brick mill and started to trudge toward Recycle, Ltd. After leaving Cathryn at the hospital, he had tried to sort through his confusing emotions. He could not come to a decision about Michelle's treatment although intuition still told him that the child

was not going to go into remission. He couldn't get himself to deny her treatment, but he couldn't bear to see her suffer more than she had to. He felt trapped. As a consequence, he welcomed the idea of heading up to Shaftesbury and trying to obtain some hard evidence of benzene dumping. At least that satisfied his emotional need for action.

As he came to the end of the building, he stopped and looked around the corner. He now had a full view of the

factory that had taken over the last abandoned mill building in the long row.

With the Polaroid and flashlight in his coat pockets and

the sample jars in his hands, Charles rounded the corner and headed toward the Pawtomack River, initially moving parallel to the hurricane fence. Once he could no longer see the light over the factory entrance, he cut diagonally across the empty lot, reaching the fence close to the riverbank. First the flashlight, then the sample jars were gently tossed over to land in the snow. With the camera slung over his shoulder, Charles grasped the mesh and began to climb. He teetered on the top, then leaped for the ground, landing on his feet but tumbling over onto his back. Fearful of being seen in the

open lot, he gathered his things and hurried over to the shadow of the old factory.

He waited for a few moments, listening to the familiar sounds coming from inside the building. From where he was standing, he could look across the mostly frozen Pawtomack

River and make out the trees on the opposite bank. The river was about fifty yards wide at that point. When he had

regained his breath, he struggled along the building, heading for the corner facing the river. The going was difficult because the snow covered all sorts of trash and debris.

Charles reached the side of the building facing the river

and, shielding his eyes from the lazy snowflakes, he looked down at his goal: the two metal holding tanks. Unfortunately, they were close to the opposite end of the building. After a short pause, Charles set out climbing through the rusted and twisted remains of discarded machinery, only to find himself barred from further advance by a granite-lined sluice about ten feet across and five feet deep. The sluice came from a

low arch beneath the building and ran toward the river bank where it was dammed with wooden planks. About midway in the opposite masonry wall was a connecting channel to a large lagoon. The fluid in the sluice and in the lagoon was not frozen and it had the unmistakable acrid smell of discarded industrial chemicals.

Immediately adjacent to the factory, Charles saw that two stout planks had been laid across the sluice. Putting his sample jars down, Charles flipped the planks over to rid them of their veneer of snow and ice. Then, with great care, he struggled across the makeshift bridge holding the sample jars under his right arm and using his left to support himself against the building.

On the opposite side of the sluice the ground sloped down and Charles could approach the level of the lagoon. From the makeshift appearance of the setup, particularly the incompetently constructed dam, Charles knew that the

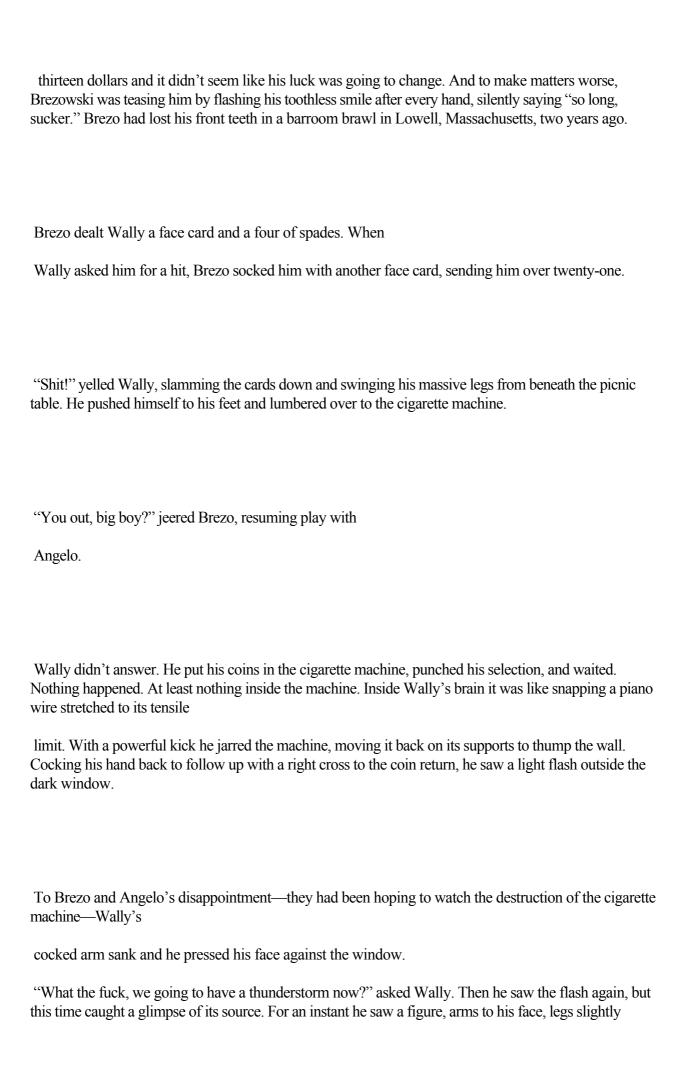
discarded chemicals in the lagoon continuously made their way into the river. He wanted a sample of that syrupy fluid. He bent down at the edge and, holding on to the upper lip of one of the jars, collected a pint or so of the slowly bubbling sludge. Using a bit of snow, Charles wiped off the jar,

capped it, and left it to be retrieved on the way back. Meanwhile he wanted a photo of the dam, which kept this chemical cesspool from totally emptying itself into the river below.

• • •

Wally Crabb had taken an early dinner break from the

rubber ovens with the two guys he played poker with: Angelo DeJesus and Giorgio Brezowski. Sitting at one of the picnic tables in the lunchroom, they'd played blackjack while they absentmindedly consumed their sandwiches. It hadn't been a good evening for Wally. By six-twenty he was down about





to the metal holding tanks. With the flashlight he tried to make sense out of the profusion of pipes and valves. One pipe led directly to a fenced-off area at the edge of the parking lot and obviously served as the off-load site. Another pipe coursed away from the tanks and with a T-connector joined the roof drain conduit on its way to the river bank. Using great care to keep from slipping down the embankment, Charles managed to get to the edge, which was some twenty feet above the surface of the river. The roof drain ended abruptly, spilling its contents down the embankment. The smell of benzene was intense and below the pipe was a patch of open water. The rest of the river was solidly frozen and covered with snow. After taking several pictures of the pipe, Charles leaned out with his second jar and caught some of the fluid dripping from the end. When he thought he had enough, he closed the jar and left it next to the first one. He was almost finished; his mission was more successful than he had hoped. He just wanted to photograph the T-connection between the pipe from the storage tanks and the drain conduit and the feed pipe from the storage tanks back to where it emerged

from the factory.

A slight wind had come up, and the once-lazy snowflakes

were now being driven into Charles's face. Before taking the picture, he dusted the snow off the pipes, then sighed

through the viewfinder. He wasn't satisfied. He wanted to get the T-connector and the storage tanks in the same photo, so he stepped over the pipes, squatted down, and sighted again. Satisfied, he depressed the shutter mechanism but nothing

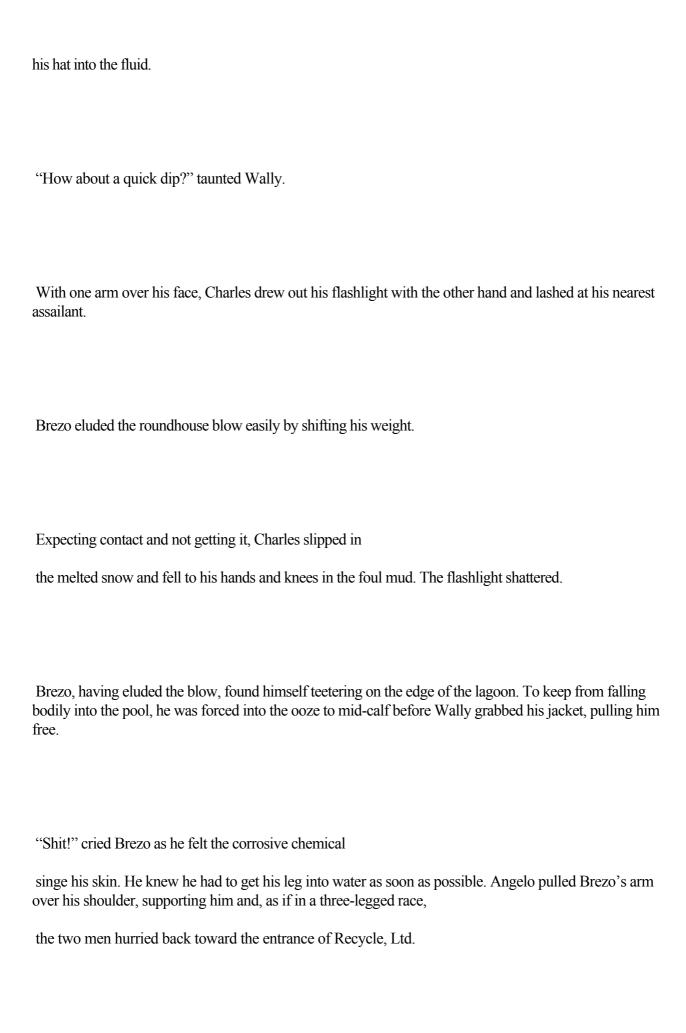
happened. Looking at the camera, he realized he hadn't turned the flash bar around. He did so quickly, then sighed again. Now he could see the storage tank, the pipe coming from the tank, and the juncture with the roof drain. It was perfect. He pushed the shutter release.

The flash of the camera was followed instantly by a

sudden, powerful jerk as the Polaroid camera was torn from Charles's fingers. He looked up from his crouching position to see three men in hooded parkas, silhouetted against the dark sky. They had him cornered against the storage tanks. Before Charles could move, the camera was tossed end over end into the center of the black lagoon.

Charles stood up, struggling to see the faces beneath the hoods. Without words, the two smaller men lunged forward and grabbed his arms. The sudden movement caught Charles off guard and he didn't struggle. The third man, the big one, went through Charles's coat pockets, finding the small collection of

photographs. With a flick of the wrist they followed the camera into the chemical pond, appearing like white wafers on the surface.
The men let Charles go and stepped back. Charles still couldn't see their faces, and it made their appearance that much more frightening. Charles panicked and tried to run between one of the smaller men and the storage tank. The man reacted instantly, jabbing a fist into Charles's face and connecting with his nose. The blow stunned Charles, bringing a slight trickle of blood down his chin.
"Nice poke, Brezo," laughed Wally.
Charles recognized the voice.
The men pushed him toward the chemical lagoon so that he stumbled over the pipes underfoot. Teasing him, they cuffed his head with open hands, slapping his ears. Charles vainly tried to parry the flutter of blows.
"Trespassing, eh?" said Brezo.
"Looking for trouble, eh?" said Angelo.  "I think he found it," said Wally.
They crowded Charles to the very edge of the cesspool of acrid chemicals. A glancing blow knocked



Charles scrambled to his feet and bolted for the two

planks over the old sluice. Wally made a grab for Charles but missed him, and in the process slipped and fell to his hands and knees. Belying his bulk, he was back on his feet in an instant. Charles thundered over the planks forgetting his previous nervousness at crossing. He thought about pushing

the planks into the sluice but Wally was too close behind. Fearful of being thrown into the chemical lagoon, Charles ran as fast as possible, but the going was difficult. First he had to climb through the discarded machinery, then run across the snow-covered, littered lot until he got to the hurricane fence. Wally was hindered by the same objects but, used to working out, he made better time.

Charles started up the fence but unfortunately he'd picked a spot between two uprights. The lack of support,

particularly near the top, made the climbing more difficult.

Wally Crabb reached the fence and began shaking it

violently. Charles had all he could do to hold on, much less continue climbing. Then Wally reached up and grabbed Charles's right foot. Charles tried to kick free but Wally had a good hold and he merely put his weight on it.

The force overrode Charles's grasp, and he tumbled off the fence, directly on top of Wally. Desperately Charles searched beneath the snow for some object with which he could defend himself. He came up with an old shoe. He flung it at Wally, and although it missed its mark, it gave Charles a chance to stand and flee along the fence toward the river. For Charles, the situation was like being inside a cage with a raging animal.

Running in the snow along the fence was next to

impossible. The crust sometimes supported Charles's weight, other times it didn't, and there was no way to tell before taking a step. Under the snow was a wide assortment of debris ranging from fresh garbage to wayward rubber tires and metal scrap that kept trapping him. Fearful he was going to be caught any moment, Charles glanced over his shoulder. One

look was enough to ascertain that the obstacle course was equally difficult for Wally and Charles reached the river bank first.

His descent to the water was a marginally controlled fall. With his hands out at his sides like outriggers on a canoe, Charles slipped and slid down the embankment, coming to a jarring halt where the ice had buckled at the river's edge. Avoiding the patch of open water, Charles scrambled out onto the ice, and tried to keep his balance. Wally came down the embankment with a bit more care and consequently lost some ground. Charles was around the portion of the fence that extended out from shore and starting back up the embankment when Wally reached the river's edge.

Almost at the top of the embankment, Charles's feet

suddenly slid out from under him. Panic-stricken, his hands

grasped for a hold. At the last second he caught a small bush and halted his backward movement. He tried to scramble back up but could not get any traction. Wally had already gained the shore and started up toward Charles, closing the short distance between them.

Wally reached up to grab Charles's leg. He was inches away when he seemed to switch to slow motion. His legs stiffened but it was no use. Slowly at first, then rapidly, he slid backwards.

With renewed effort, Charles tried to climb the last five feet. By jamming his toes against the embankment he discovered he could create crude footholds. In this way, he inched upwards and threw his upper body over the edge. He pulled his feet up, then raised himself on his hands and knees. In so doing, he felt rocks and pieces of brick under

the snow. He kicked them loose and picked up a handful. Wally had begun a new assault on the embankment and at that moment was only five feet away.

Cocking his arm back, Charles threw the stones. One hit

Wally on the point of the shoulder and he grunted in pain. He grabbed the area with his opposite hand only to slip back

down the embankment. Quickly Charles kicked loose additional stones and threw them down at Wally, who put his arms over his head and retreated out onto the ice.

Charles fled back toward the row of deserted mill buildings, intending to run around the end of the first building and get to the Pinto, which was parked a hundred yards back. But as he started in that direction, he saw several flashlights coming around the opposite end of the hurricane fence. They swung in his direction, momentarily blinding him, and he knew he'd been spotted. He had no choice. He ran directly for the empty building.

Dashing through a doorless opening Charles was quickly engulfed by impenetrable darkness. With his arms swinging in exploratory arcs he inched forward, encountering a wall. As if in a maze, he stumbled along the wall until he came to a door. Bending down and searching the floor, he found some rubble, which he tossed through the opening. It hit yet another wall and fell back to the floor. Without letting go

of the doorjamb, Charles reached out in the darkness. His fingertips touched the wall that he'd hit with the rubble. He let go of the doorframe and walked along this new wall.

Hearing shouts behind him, Charles felt a surge of panic.

He had to find a place to hide. He was convinced that these Recycle people were crazy and that they were planning to kill him. Charles was certain they had hoped to force him into the chemical lagoon, hoping perhaps to make it appear as an accident. He was, after all, a trespasser who could conceivably slip into that cesspool in the dark. And if they were willing to dump poisons into a public river, morality

was not high on their priority list.

Charles came to a corner in the wall he was following. He strained to see but he couldn't even detect his own hand moving in front of his face. Bending down, he gathered a few pebbles and tossed them around the corner to see how far away the next wall was. He waited for the sound of the stone to

hit a wall, then a floor. There was neither. After a long delay, Charles heard the distant splash of water. He shrank back. Somewhere immediately in front of him was a void, perhaps an old elevator shaft.

Guessing that he was in a hallway, Charles threw some pebbles perpendicular to the wall he'd been following. The stones hit immediately, and stretching out in the darkness, Charles felt the opposite wall.

With his foot Charles began to kick loose plaster ahead of him to be sure that he'd pass the shaft. It worked, and he slowly moved ahead, gaining a certain amount of confidence. He had no way of judging the distance he'd traveled, but he felt it was significant. Then his hand touched another doorjamb. Feeling ahead, his other hand grasped a wooden

door, open about a foot. The knob was missing. Charles pushed and the door reluctantly opened, restricted by debris on the floor. With great care Charles inched into the room, feeling ahead with his right foot, and smelling a foul, musty odor. He encountered a bale of material, then realized it was an old, rotting rug.

Behind him he heard someone yell into the cavernous

interior. "We want to talk to you, Charles Martel." The sound

echoed in the blackness. Then he heard heavy footsteps and voices talking among themselves. With a surge of new fear, he let go of the door and started across the room, his hands sweeping around in front of him, hoping to find some hiding place. Almost immediately he tripped over another rug, then hit up against a low, metal object. He felt along the top of it, deciding it was a cabinet of sorts that had been tipped over. Stepping around it, he ducked down among a pile of smelly rags. He burrowed beneath the rags as best he could, feeling some movement of little feet. He hoped it was mice he'd disturbed and not something larger.

Except for the luminous dial on his watch, Charles could see nothing. He waited, his breath sounding harsh in the

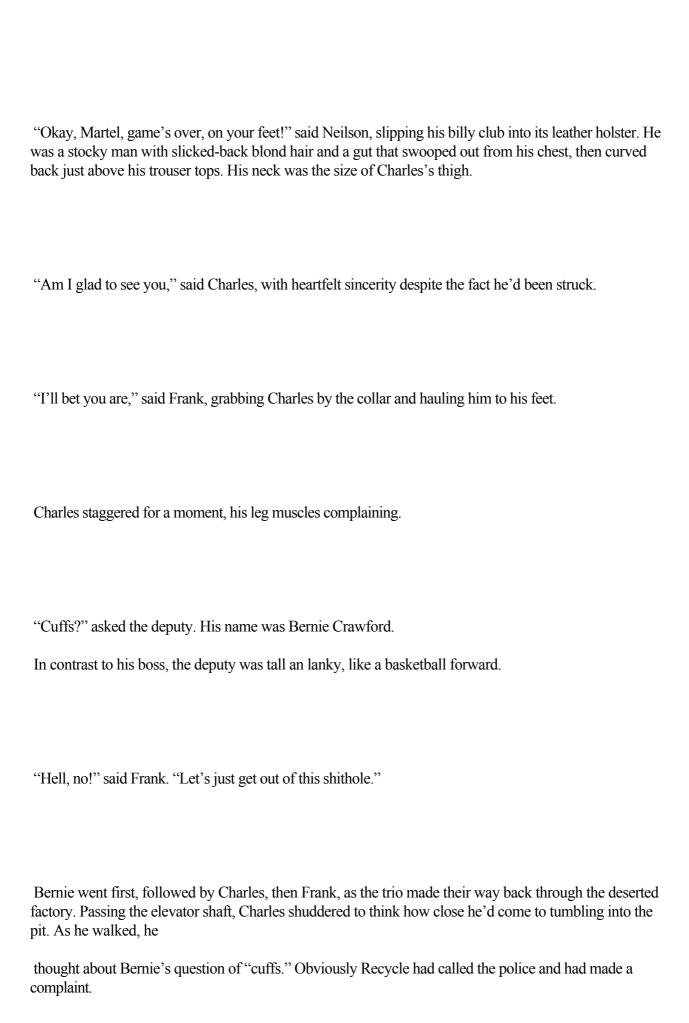
stillness and his heart beating audibly in his ears. He was caught. There was no place else to run. They could do to him what they wanted; no one would find his body, especially if it were thrown down the old elevator shaft. Charles had never felt such limitless terror.

A light flickered in the hallway, sending tiny reflections into Charles's room. The flashlights were moving

down the hallway, coming in his direction. For a moment they disappeared and utter blackness descended. He heard a distant splash as if a large object had been thrown down the elevator shaft, followed by laughter.
The flashlight beams returned to the hallway, swaying and searching as Charles's pursuers drew nearer. Now he could hear every footstep. With a sudden, grating noise, the old wooden door was shoved open, and a sharp ray of light played around the room.
Charles pulled his head down like a turtle, hoping that his pursuer would be satisfied with a cursory glance. But such was not the case. Charles heard the man kick the roll of old rug and saw the light going over every inch of the floor. With a stab of panic he knew he was about to be discovered.
Leaping from beneath his scant cover, Charles bolted for the door. The pursuer whirled his light, silhouetting Charles in the doorway. "Here he is!" the man yelled.
Intending to try to retrace his steps out of the maze,  Charles started down the corridor. Instead he crashed into another pursuer coming down the hall who grabbed him, dropping his flashlight in the process. Charles struck blindly, desperately trying to free himself. Then, even before he felt the pain, his legs buckled beneath him. The man had hit Charles on the back of his knees with a club.

Charles collapsed to the floor as his attacker reached for his flashlight. The other man emerged from the room Charles had been hiding in and his light played over the scene. For the first time, Charles got a look at the man who'd hit him. To his astonishment he found himself looking at Frank Neilson, Shaftesbury's Chief of Police. The blue serge

uniform with all its bits and pieces of decoration, including holster and hand gun, never looked so good.



No one spoke as they marched single file out of the old
mill, across the empty lot, and to the Dodge Aspen squad car. Charles was put into the backseat, behind the thick mesh guard. Frank started the car and began to pull away from the curb.
"Hey, my car's back that way," said Charles, moving forward to speak through the mesh.
"We know where your car is," said Frank.
Sitting back, Charles tried to calm down. His heart was still thumping in his chest and his legs ached horribly. He glanced out the window wondering if they were taking him to the station. But they didn't make a U-turn. Instead they headed south and turned in at the gate for the Recycle parking lot.
Charles sat forward again. "Listen. I need your help. I
need to get some hard evidence to prove that Recycle is dumping poisons into the Pawtomack. That's what I was doing here when they jumped me and destroyed my camera."
"You listen, Mack," said Frank. "We got a call you were trespassing here. And on top of that you assaulted one of the workers, pushing him into some acid. Last night you shoved around the foreman, Nat Archer."
Charles sat back, realizing that he was just going to have to wait out whatever protocol Frank had decided on. Presumably Frank wanted some positive identification. With a certain amount of exasperation clouding his relief, Charles resigned himself to having to go down to the police station.

Archer trudged off toward the factory.
Frank, still snapping his gum, walked around the squad car and got in.
Charles, confused, turned to look at Brezo. The man stood in front of Charles smiling a toothless grin. Charles noticed a scar that ran down the side of his face across his cheek, making his smile slightly asymmetric.
In a flash of unexpected violence, Brezo unleashed a powerful blow to Charles's midsection. Charles
saw the blow coming and managed to deflect it slightly with his elbow.  Still it caught Charles in the abdomen, doubling him up, and he crumbled to the cold earth, struggling for a breath. Brezo stood over him expecting more action, but he only kicked a
bit of snow at Charles and walked off, limping slightly on his bandaged leg.
Charles pushed himself up onto his hands and knees. For a moment he was disoriented with pain. He heard a car door open and felt a tug on his arm, forcing him to his feet. Holding his side, Charles allowed himself to be led back to the squad car. Once inside, he let his head fall back on the seat.
He felt the car skid but didn't care. He kept his eyes
closed. It hurt too much just to breathe. After a short time, the car stopped and the door opened. Charles opened his eyes
and saw Frank Neilson looking into the back seat. "Let's go, buster. You should feel lucky you got off so easy." He reached in and pulled Charles toward him.

Charles got out, feeling a little dizzy. Frank closed the rear door, then got back into the driver's seat. He rolled down the window. "I think you'd better stay away from

Recycle. It's got around town pretty quick that you're trying to cause trouble. Let me tell you something. If you keep at it, you'll find it. In fact, you'll find more trouble'n

you're bargaining for. The town survives on Recycle, and we law enforcement officers won't be able to guarantee your safety if you try to change that. Or your family's either. Think about it."

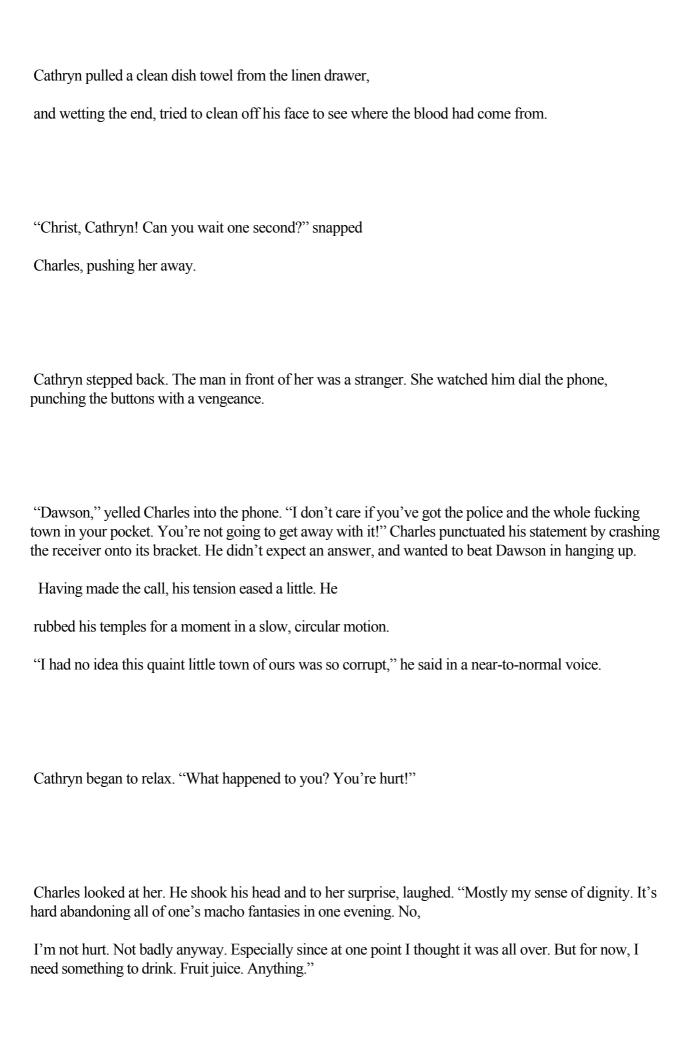
Frank rolled his window up and spun his wheels, leaving Charles standing at the curb, his legs splattered with slush. The Pinto was twenty feet ahead, partially buried under a shroud of snow. Even through the pain, Charles felt a cold rage stirring inside himself. For Charles, adversity had always been a powerful stimulus for action.

Cathryn and Gina were cleaning up the kitchen when they heard a car turn into the drive. Cathryn ran to the window and pulled the red checkered curtain aside. She hoped to God it was Charles; she hadn't heard from him since he'd fled from the hospital, and no one had answered his extension at the lab. She knew she had to tell Charles about the proceedings at the courthouse. She couldn't let him learn about it when he got the court citation in the morning.

Watching the lights come up the driveway, Cathryn found herself whispering, "Let it be you, Charles, please." The car swept around the final curve and passed the window. It was

the Pinto! Cathryn sighed in relief. She turned back into the room and took the dish towel from Gina's surprised hands.







I'm sure.'	,
	mean that the way it sounded," said Cathryn. "I know you're concerned. I'm just worried. You took Michelle's heart complication so hard."
	nappened now?" demanded Charles, raising his aid that Cathryn was leading up to terrible news.
"Please ca	alm down," said Cathryn gently.
"Then tell	I me what's happened to Michelle."
"It's just l	her fever," said Cathryn. "It's gone up and the doctors are concerned."
"Oh God!	!" said Charles.
"Everythi	ing else seems OK. Her heart rate has stayed
"Everythi	

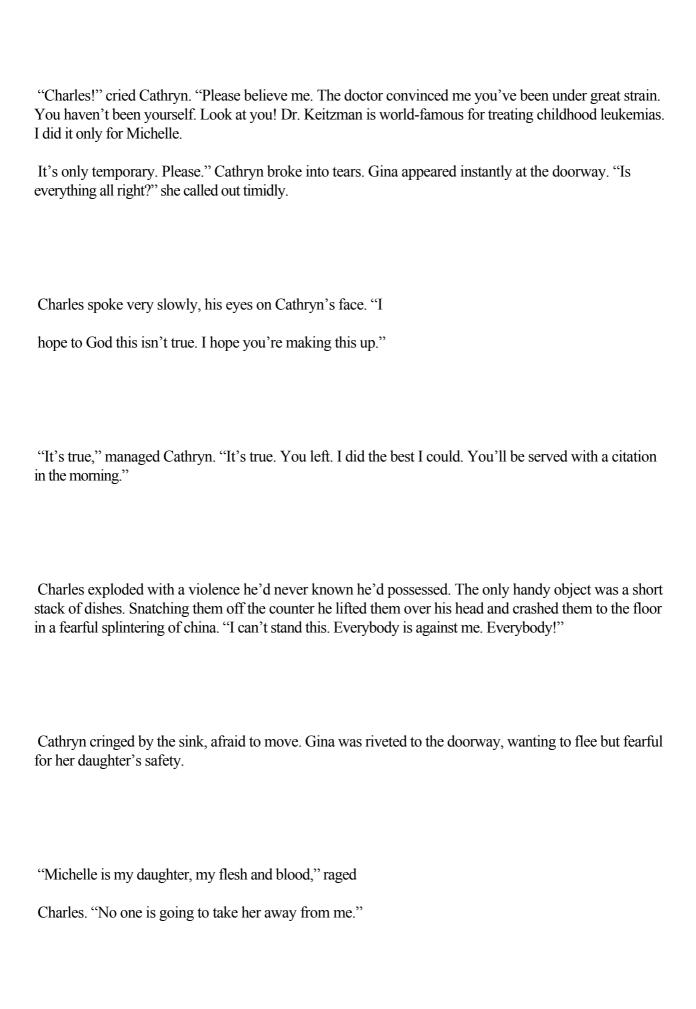


Abruptly Charles stood up. "I'm going back to the hospital," he said with resolve. "Right now!"
"But why, Charles? What can you do now?" Cathryn felt a surge of panic, and she leaped to her feet.
"I want to be with her. Besides, I've made up my mind. The medications are going to be stopped. Or at least reduced to an orthodox dose. They're experimenting and if it were going to work, we would have seen the circulatory leukemic cells go down. Instead they've gone up."
"But the medicines have cured others." Cathryn knew she had to talk Charles out of going to the hospital. If he did, there'd be a crisis a confrontation.
"I know chemotherapy has helped others," said Charles.  "Unfortunately Michelle's case is different. The normal protocol has already failed. I'm not going to let my daughter be experimented on. Keitzman had his chance. She's not going to dissolve in front of my eyes like Elizabeth."
Charles started for the door.
Carolyn clutched at his sleeve. "Charles, please. You can't go now. You're a mess."
Looking down at himself, Charles realized Cathryn was right. But did he really care? He hesitated, then

ran upstairs where he changed his clothes and washed his hands and face. When he ran back down, Cathryn realized that he had made up his mind. He was going to the hospital that night and had every intention of stopping Michelle's medicines, her only chance at life. Once again, the doctors had correctly forecasted his reaction. Cathryn realized she had to tell him about the guardianship right away. She could not afford to wait. Charles pulled on his befouled jacket, checking for his car keys in his pocket. Cathryn leaned her back up against the counter, her hands gripping the Formica edge. "Charles," she began in a quiet tone. "You cannot stop Michelle's medicine." Charles found his keys. "Of course I can," he said confidently. "Arrangements have been made so that you cannot," said Cathryn. With his hand on the back door, Charles paused. The word "arrangements" had an ominous connotation. "What are you trying to say?" "I want you to come back, take your coat off, and sit

down," said Cathryn, as if she were talking to a recalcitrant teenager.

Charles walked directly up to her. "I think you'd better tell me about these arrangements."
Although Cathryn never would have imagined it possible, she felt a touch of fear as she gazed up into Charles's
narrowed eyes. "After you left the hospital so hastily this afternoon, I had a conference with Dr. Keitzman and Dr. Wiley. They felt that you were under a severe strain and
might not be in the best position to make the right decisions about Michelle's care." Cathryn deliberately tried to echo
the legal talk she'd heard at the meeting. What terrified her most was Charles's reaction to her complicity. She wanted to emphasize that she had been a reluctant participant. She looked up into his face. His blue eyes were cold. "The hospital lawyer said that Michelle needed a temporary
guardian and the doctors agreed. They told me they could do it without my cooperation but that it would be easier if I helped. I thought I was doing the right thing although it was a hard decision. I felt one of us should still be involved."
"So what happened?" said Charles, his face becoming a dull red.
"There was an emergency hearing before a judge," said
Cathryn. She was telling it poorly and at a bad time. She was
making a mess of everything. Doggedly she continued, "The judge agreed that Michelle should get the recognized treatment for her condition as outlined by Dr. Keitzman. I was appointed temporary guardian There will be a hearing on this petition in three days and a full hearing in three weeks. The court also appointed a guardian and listen,
Charles, believe me, I've done all this for Michelle. I'm not doing anything against you or to come between you and Michelle."
Cathryn searched Charles's face for a flicker of understanding. She saw only rage.



"She's my adopted daughter," sobbed Cathryn. "I feel just as strongly as you." Overcoming her fear, she grabbed the lapels of Charles's coat, shaking him as best she could. "Please calm down. Please," she cried desperately. The last thing Charles wanted was to be held down. By reflex his arm shot up and with unnecessary force, knocked Cathryn's arms into the air. Following through with the blow, the side of his hand inadvertently caught her face, knocking her backwards against the kitchen table. A chair fell over and Gina screamed, running into the room and positioning her corpulent bulk between Charles and her dazed daughter. She began reciting a prayer as she crossed herself. Charles reached out and rudely shoved the woman aside. He grabbed Cathryn by both shoulders and shook her like a rag doll. "I want you to call and cancel those legal proceedings. Do you understand?" Chuck heard the commotion and ran down the stairs. He took one look at the scene in front of him and sprang into the room, grabbing his father from behind, and pinning his arms to his side. Charles tried to twist loose but he couldn't. Instead he released Cathryn, and lunged back with the point of his elbow, digging it into the pit of Chuck's abdomen. The boy's breath came out in a forceful huff. Charles spun, then shoved Chuck backwards so that he tripped, fell, and hit his head on the floor. Cathryn screamed. The crisis was expanding in a chain reaction. She threw herself on top of Chuck to protect him from his father and it was at this point Charles realized that he was attacking his own son.

He took a step forward but Cathryn scre	amed again,
shielding the crumpled boy. Gina stepped the devil.	l between Charles and the others murmuring something about
±	ce of Jean Paul in the doorway. The boy backed away when ack at the others, Charles felt an overwhelming sense of med out of the house.
Gina closed the back door behind him, wheard the Pinto rumble down the drivewa	while Cathryn helped Chuck into one of the kitchen chairs. They y.
"I hate him! I hate him!" cried Chuck, ho	lding his stomach with both hands.
"No, no," soothed Cathryn. "This is all a	nightmare. We'll all wake up and it will be over."
"Your eye!" exclaimed Gina, coming up	to Cathryn and tilting her head back.
"It's nothing," said Cathryn.	
"Nothing? It's becoming black and blue.	I think you'd better get some ice on it."

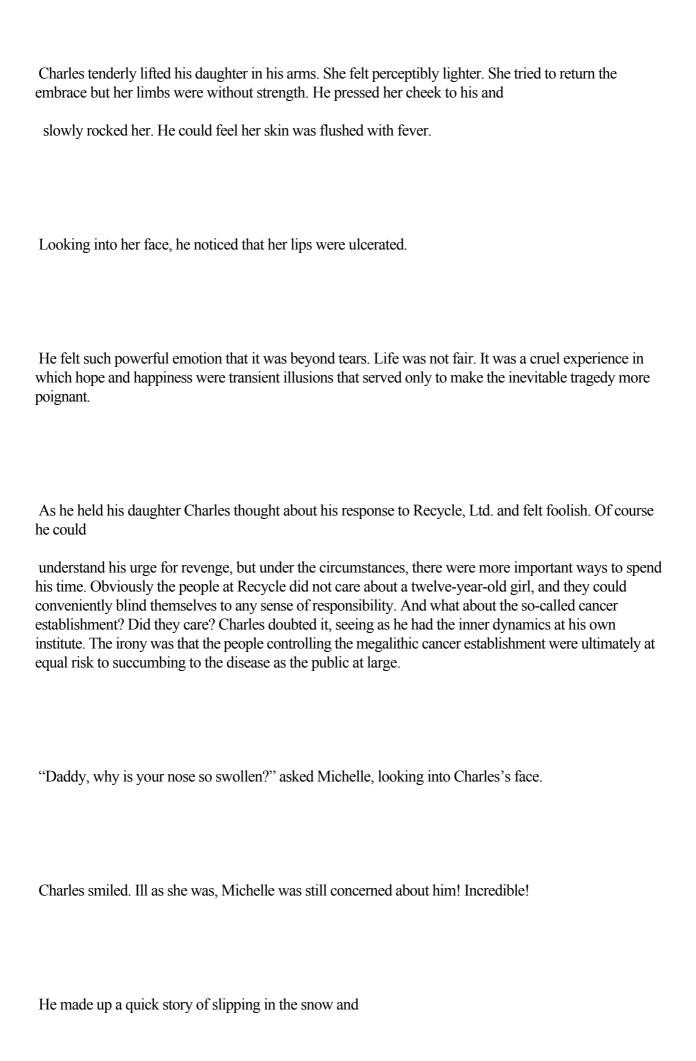


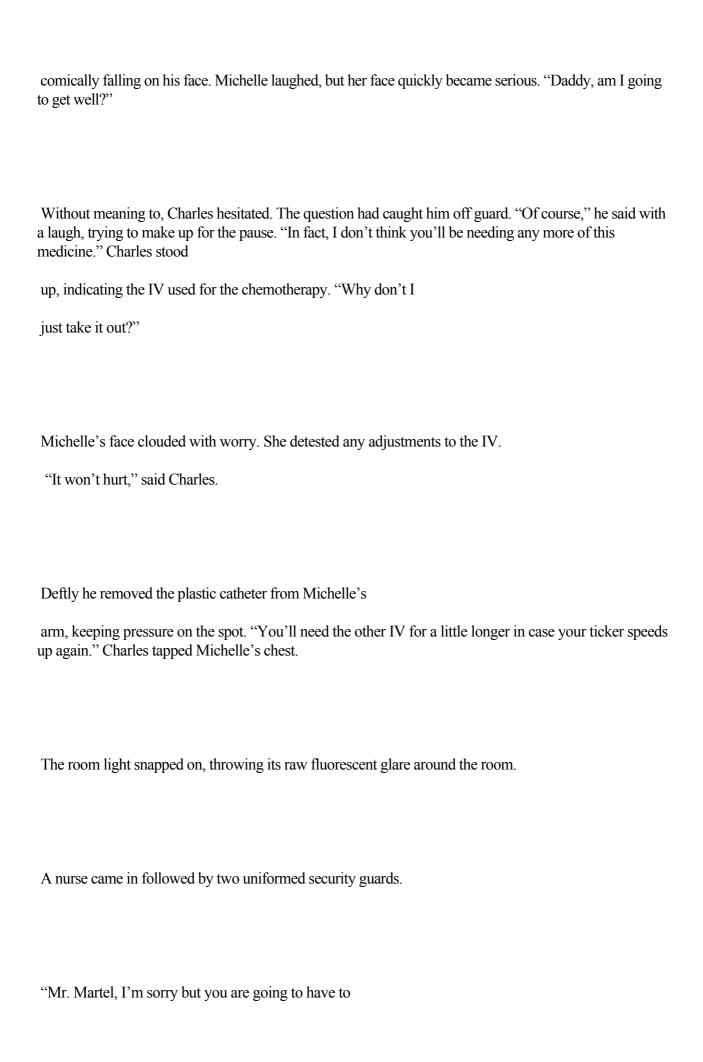


"I can't believe that," said Cathryn.
"That's something that cannot be ascertained unless he's seen professionally. But, believe me, it's a possibility.  Maybe you should leave the house for a day or two. You've got a family to consider."
"I suppose we could go to my mother's," said Cathryn. It was true she had others to think about besides herself.
"I think it would be best. Just until Charles calms down."
"What if Charles goes to the hospital tonight?"
"No need for you to worry about that. I'll alert the hospital, and I'll let the floor know you have guardianship. Don't worry, everything is going to be all right."
Cathryn hung up, wishing she felt as optimistic as Dr. Keitzman. She still had the feeling that things were going to get worse.
A half hour later, with a good deal of misgiving, Cathryn, Gina, and the two boys trudged out into the snow with overnight bags and piled in the station wagon. They dropped Jean Paul at a school friend's house where he'd been invited to stay, and began the drive into Boston. No one spoke.

## **ELEVEN**

It was after nine when Charles reached Pediatric Hospital. In contrast to the daytime chaos, the street outside was quiet, and he found a parking spot in front of the medical center bookstore. He entered the hospital through the main entrance and rode up to Anderson 6 on an empty elevator.
He was accosted by someone when he passed the nurses' station, but he didn't even look in the direction of the voice. He got to Michelle's room and slipped through the partially open door.
It was darker than in the hall with light coming from a
small night-light near the floor. Giving his eyes a chance to adjust, Charles stood for a moment taking in the scene. The cardiac monitor was visible on the other side of the bed. The auditory signal had been turned down but the visual signal traced a repetitive fluorescent blip across the tiny screen. There were two intravenous lines, one running into each of Michelle's arms. The one on the left had a piggyback connector, and Charles knew it was being used as the infusion route for the chemotherapy.
Charles silently advanced into the room, his eyes glued to the sleeping face of his daughter. As he got closer he realized, to his surprise, that Michelle's eyes were not closed. They were watching his every move.
"Michelle?" whispered Charles.
"Daddy?" whispered Michelle in response. She'd thought it was another hospital technician sneaking up on her in the night to take more blood.





leave." She noticed the dangling IV line and shook her head angrily.
Charles did not respond. He sat on the edge of Michelle's bed and again took her into his arms.
The nurse gestured for the security men to help. They came forward and gently urged Charles to leave
"We could have you arrested if you don't cooperate," said the nurse, "but I don't want to do that."
Charles allowed the guards to pull his arms from around Michelle.
Michelle looked at the guards and then her father. "Why would they arrest you?"
"I don't know," said Charles with a smile. "I guess it's not visiting hours."
Charles stood up, bent over and kissed Michelle, and said, "Try to be good. I'll be back soon."



Pulling the phone over to him, Charles put in a call to

Dr. Keitzman. While he waited for the call back, he glanced through the rest of the chart. The plot of Michelle's fever was the most alarming. It had been hovering around one hundred until that afternoon when it had shot up to one hundred four. Charles read the carefully typed cardiology report. The conclusion was that the ventricular tachycardia could have been caused by either the rapid infusion of the

second dose of Daunorubicin or a leukemic infiltration of the heart, or perhaps, a combination of the two. At that point, the phone rang. It was Dr. Keitzman.

Both Dr. Keitzman and Charles made an effort at being cordial.

"As a physician," said Dr. Keitzman, "I'm sure you are aware that we doctors frequently find ourselves in the

dilemma of adhering to the established and best principles of medicine or giving way to the wishes of the patient or the family. Personally, I believe in the former approach and as soon as one begins to make exception, whatever the

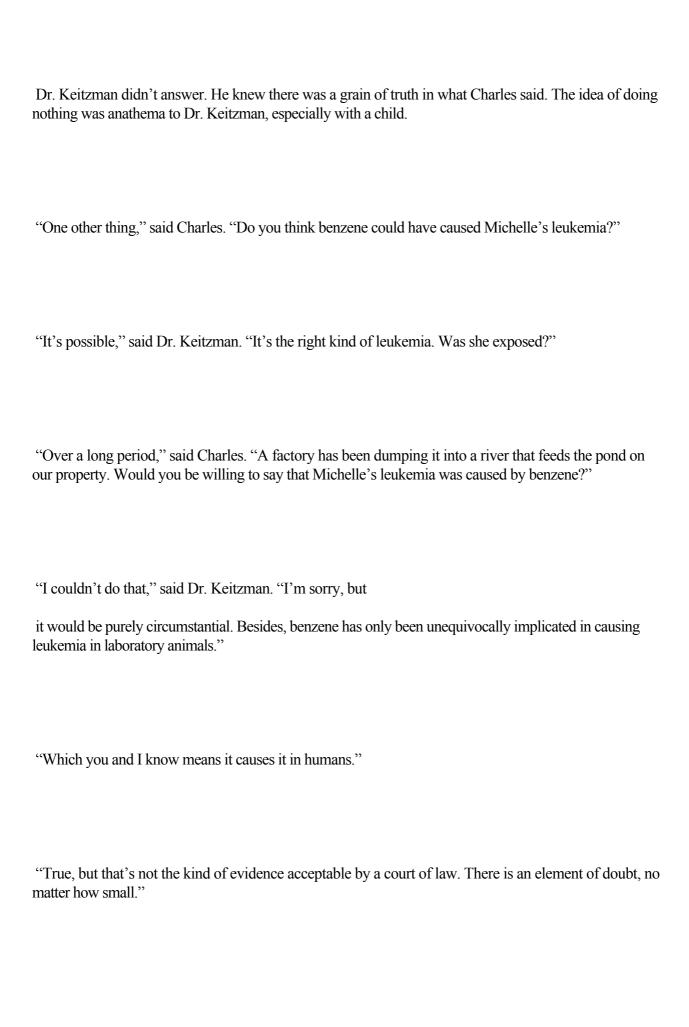
justification, it's like opening Pandora's box. So we're having to rely on the courts more and more."

"But clearly," said Charles, controlling himself,

"chemotherapy is not helping in Michelle's case."

"Not yet," admitted Dr. Keitzman. "But it's still early. There's still a chance. Besides, it's all we have."

"I think you're treating yourself," snapped Charles.



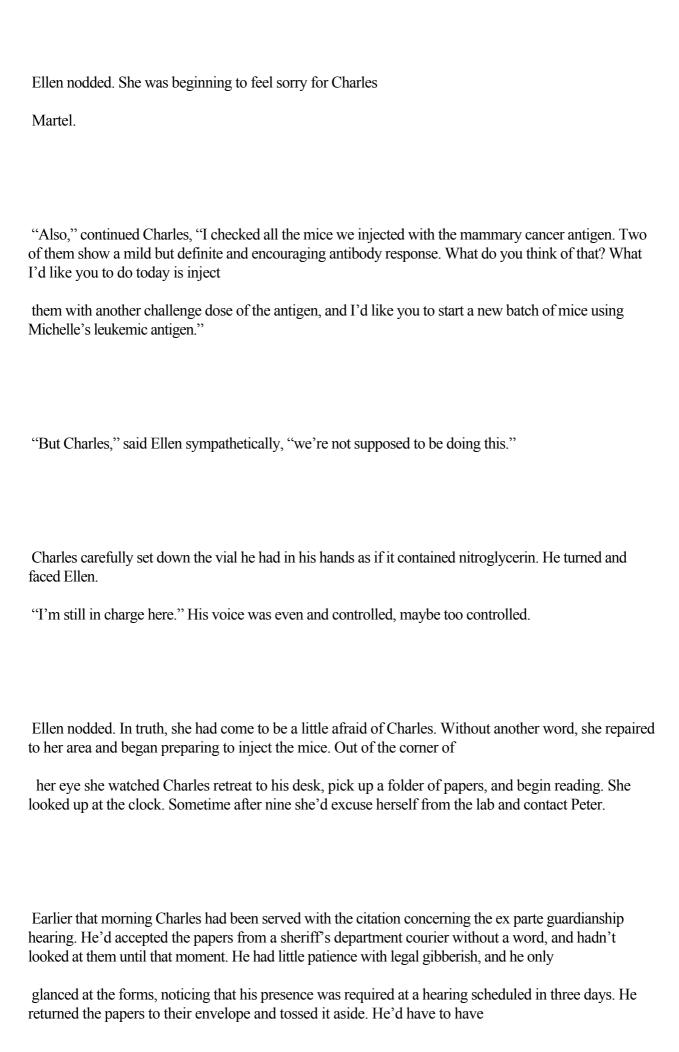
"So you won't help?" asked Charles. "I'm sorry but I can't," said Dr. Keitzman. "But there is something I can do, and I feel it's my responsibility. I'd like to encourage you to seek psychiatric consultation. You've had a terrible shock." Charles thought about telling the man off, but he didn't. Instead he hung up on him. When he stood up he thought about sneaking back to Michelle's room but he couldn't. The charge nurse was watching him like a hawk and one of the uniformed security men was still there, leafing through a People magazine. Charles went to the elevator and pushed the button. As he waited, he began to outline what courses of action were open to him. He was on his own and would be even more on his own after the meeting tomorrow with Dr. Ibanez. Ellen Sheldon arrived at the Weinburger later than usual. Even so she took her time because the walk to the door was treacherous. The Boston weather had been true to form the previous night, starting out with rain that turned to snow, then back to rain again. Then the whole mess had frozen solid. By the time Ellen reached the front entrance it was about eight-thirty. The reason she was so late was twofold. First she didn't even know if she'd see Charles that day so there was no need to set up the lab. Second, she'd been out very late the night before. She'd violated one of her cardinal rules: never accept a date on the spur of the moment. But after she'd told

Canceran work, he'd convinced her to take the rest of the day off. He'd also taken her home number in order to give her the results of the meeting with Charles and the Weinburgers. Although Ellen had not expected him to call, he had, and had told her of Charles's probationary status and that Charles

Dr. Morrison that Charles was not following up on the

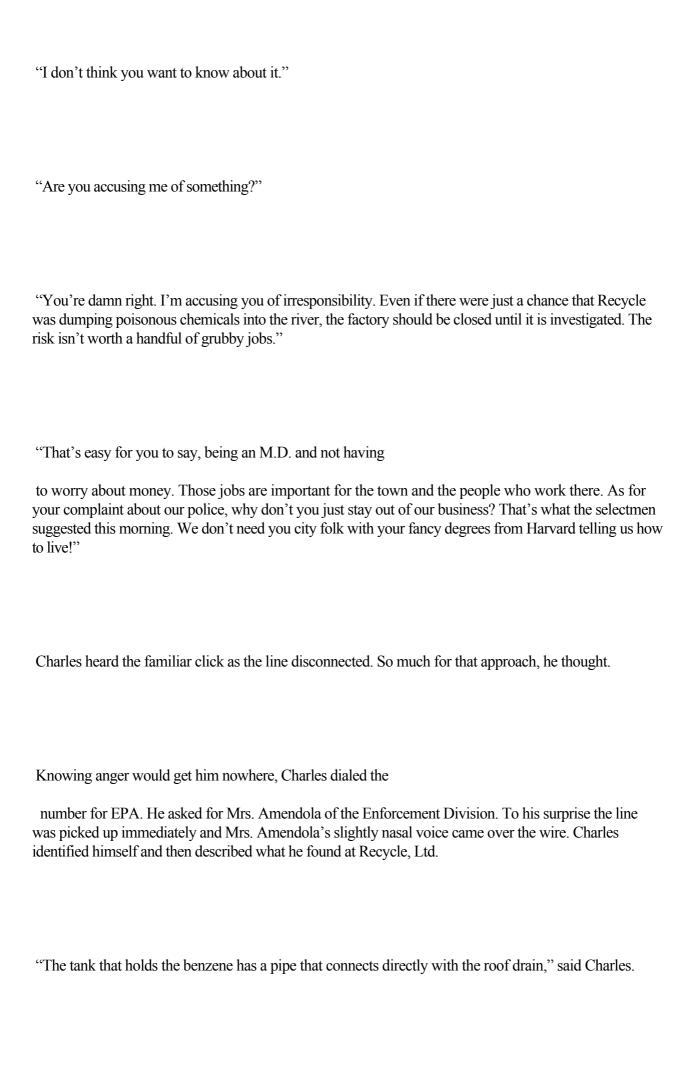
had twenty-four hours to decide whether he was going to play ball or not. Then he'd asked to take her to dinner. Deciding it was a business date, Ellen had accepted, and she was glad she had. Dr. Peter







doctor? Seems like strange behavior for a physician."
Sudden anger clouded Charles's mind. He launched into an
impassioned explanation of Recycle's dumping benzene and other toxic chemicals into the river. He told the town manager that for the sake of the community he was trying to get the factory closed down.
"I don't think the community would look kindly at closing down the factory," said John when Charles finally paused.
"There was a lot of unemployment here before that factory opened. The prosperity of our town is directly related to Recycle."
"I suppose your gauge of prosperity is the number of washing machines sold," said Charles.
"That's part of it," agreed John.
"Jesus Christ!" shouted Charles. "Causing fatal diseases
like leukemia and aplastic anemia in children is a high price to pay for prosperity, wouldn't you agree?"
"I don't know anything about that," said John evenly.





Returning to the laboratory bench, he watched Ellen's preparation. He didn't interfere because Ellen was far more dexterous than he. Instead he busied himself with the dilution of Michelle's leukemic antigen to prepare it for injection into the mice. Since the vial was sterile, Charles used sterile technique to withdraw an exact volume of the

solution. This aliquot was then added to a specific amount of sterile saline to make the concentration he desired. The vial with the remaining antigen went into the refrigerator.

With the dilution completed, Charles gave it to Ellen and told her to continue what she was doing because he was going out to find a lawyer. He told her he'd be back before lunch.

After the door closed Ellen stood there for a full five minutes watching the second hand rotate around the face of the clock. When Charles didn't return, she called the receptionist who confirmed that Charles had left the

institute. Only then did she dial Dr. Morrison. As soon as he got on the line she told him that Charles was still working on his own research; in fact, expanding it, and still

behaving peculiarly.

"That's it," said Dr. Morrison. "That is the last straw. No one can fault us for trying, but Charles Martel is finished at the Weinburger."

Charles's quest for legal representation was not as easy as he'd anticipated. Unreasonably equating skill and understanding with impressive quarters, he headed into downtown Boston, parking his car in the government center

garage. The first impressive high-rise office building was I State Street. It had a fountain, wide expanses of polished marble, and lots of tinted glass. The directory listed numerous law firms. Charles picked the one closest to the top: Begelman, Canneletto, and O'Malley, hoping that the

metaphorical implication of their high position would reflect itself in their performance. However, the only correlation turned out to be their estimated fee.

Apparently the firm did not expect street traffic and

Charles was forced to wait on an uncomfortable Chippendale love seat which would have been as good for making love as a marble park bench. The lawyer who finally saw Charles was as junior a partner as possible. To Charles he looked about fifteen years old.

Initially the conversation went well. The young lawyer

seemed genuinely surprised that a judge had granted temporary guardianship ex parte to a legal relative in place of a blood relative. However, the man was less sympathetic when he learned that Charles wanted to stop the treatment recommended by the specialists. He still would have been willing to help

if Charles had not launched into impassioned accusations against Recycle, Ltd. and the town of Shaftesbury. When the lawyer began to question Charles's priorities, they ended up in an argument. Then the man accused Charles of barratry, which particularly inflamed Charles because he did not know what it meant.

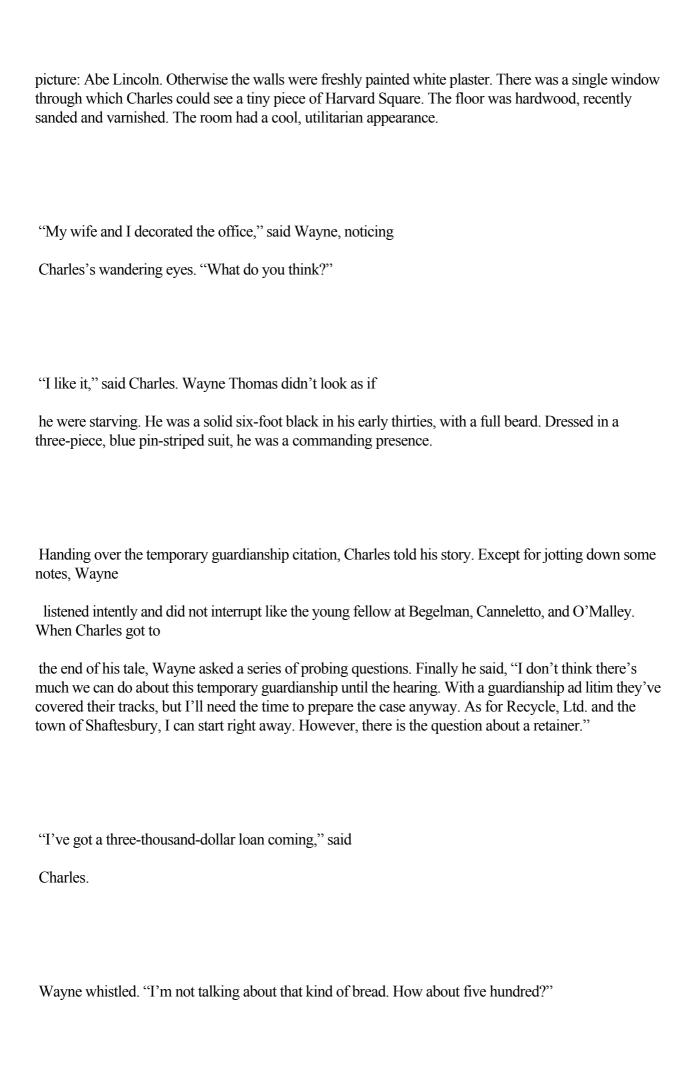
Charles left unrepresented, and instead of trying other firms in the building, he consulted the yellow pages in a nearby drugstore. Avoiding fancy addresses, Charles looked

for lawyers who were out on their own. He marked a half dozen names and began calling, asking whoever answered if they were busy or if they needed work. If there was a hesitation, Charles hung up and tried the next. On the fifth try, the lawyer answered the phone himself. Charles liked that. In response to Charles's question, the lawyer said he was starving. Charles said he'd be right over. He copied down the name and address: Wayne Thomas, 13 Brattle Street, Cambridge.

There was no fountain, no marble, no glass. In fact, 13

Brattle Street was a rear entrance, reached through a narrow, canyonlike alley. Beyond a metal door rose a flight of wooden steps. At the top were two doors. One was for a palm reader, the other for Wayne Thomas, Attorney-at-Law. Charles entered.

"Okay, man, sit right here and tell me what you got," said Wayne Thomas, pulling over a straight-backed chair. As Wayne got out a yellow pad, Charles glanced around the room. There was one



Charles agreed to send the money as soon as he got the loan. He shook hands with Wayne and for the first time noticed the man wore a thin gold earning in his right ear.

Returning to the Weinburger, Charles felt a modicum of satisfaction. At least he'd started the legal process and even if Wayne wasn't ultimately successful, he would at the very least cause Charles's adversaries some inconvenience. Outside of the thick glass entrance door, Charles waited

impatiently. Miss Andrews, who'd obviously seen him, chose to complete a line of type before releasing the door. As Charles passed her, she picked up the telephone. That wasn't an auspicious sign.

The lab was empty. He called for Ellen and, receiving no answer, checked the animal room, but she wasn't there. When he looked up at the clock he realized why. He'd been gone longer than he'd expected. Ellen was obviously out for lunch. He went over to her work area and noticed that the dilution he'd prepared of Michelle's leukemic antigen had not been touched.

Returning to his desk, he again called Mrs. Amendola at

the EPA to ask if she'd had any luck with the surveillance department. With thinly disguised impatience, she told him that his was not the only problem she was working on and that she'd call him, rather than vice versa.

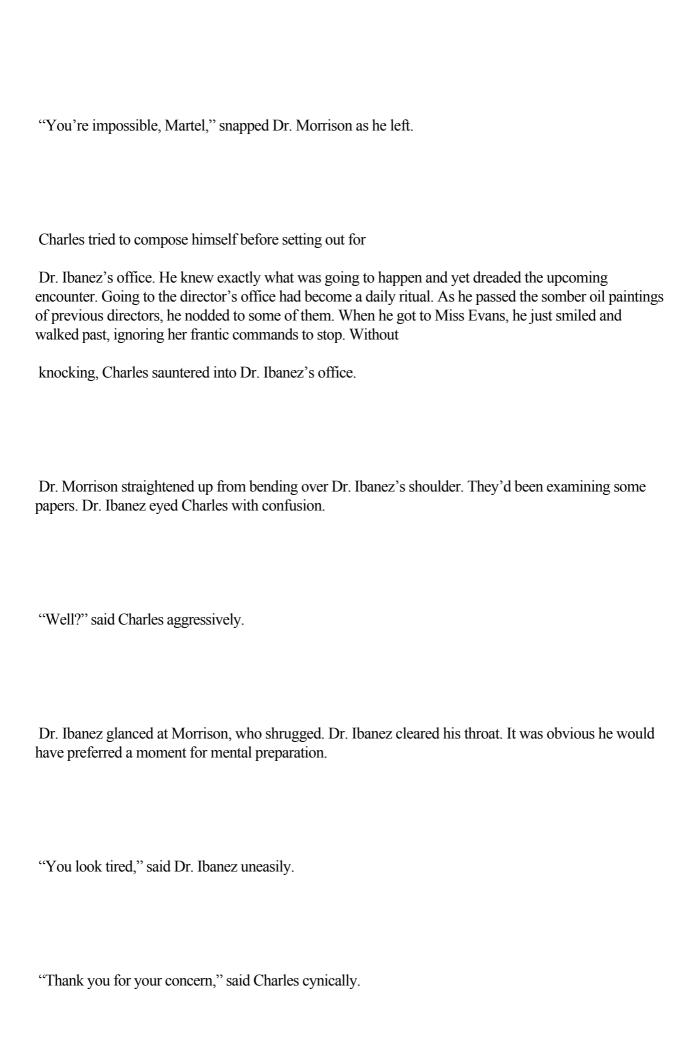
Maintaining his composure, Charles tried to call the regional head of the EPA to lodge a formal complaint about

the agency's organization, but the man was in Washington at a meeting about new hazardous waste regulations.

Desperately trying to maintain confidence in the concept

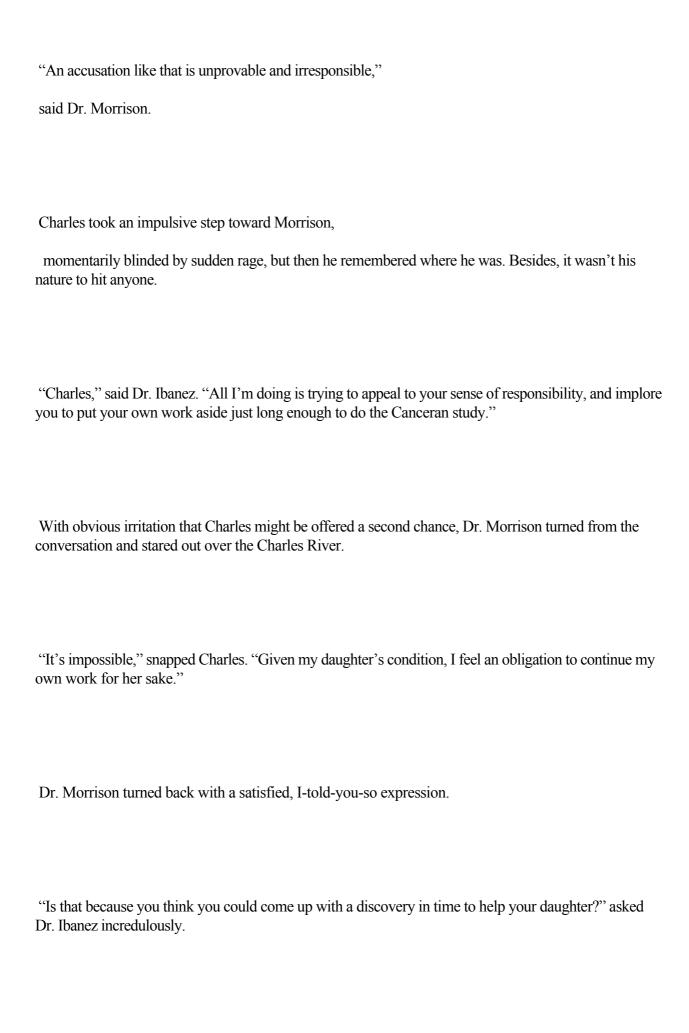
of representative government, he called the Governor of New Hampshire and the Governor of Massachusetts. In both cases the result was identical. He could not get past secretaries who persistently referred him to the State Water Pollution Control Boards. No matter what he said, including the fact that

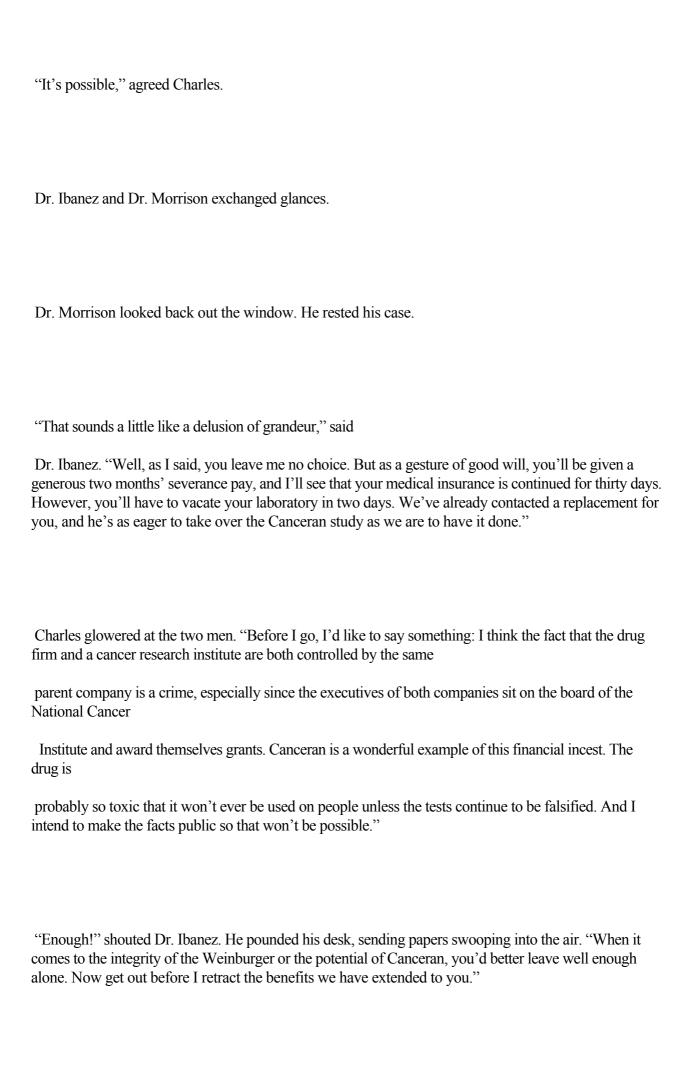
he'd already called these people, the secretaries were adamant, and he gave up. Instead he called the Democratic senator from Massachusetts.
At first the response from Washington sounded promising, but then he was switched from low-level aide to low-level aide until he found someone conversant on environment. Despite his very specific complaint, the aide insisted on keeping the conversation general. With what sounded like a prepared speech, the man gave Charles ten full minutes of propaganda about how much the senator cared about environmental issues. While waiting for a pause, Charles saw Peter Morrison walk into the lab. He hung up while the aide was in mid-sentence.
The two men eyed each other across the polished floor of Charles's lab, their outward differences even more apparent than usual. Morrison seemed to have made particular effort with his appearance that day, whereas Charles had suffered from having slept in his clothes at the lab.
Morrison had entered with a victorious smile, but as Charles turned to face him, the administrator noticed that Charles, too, was cheerfully smiling. Morrison's own grin faltered.
Charles felt as if he finally understood Dr. Morrison. He was a has-been researcher who'd turned to administration as a way of salvaging his ego. Beneath his polished exterior, he still recognized that the researcher was the king and, in that context, resented his dependence on Charles's ability and commitment.  "You're wanted immediately in the director's office," said Dr. Morrison. "Don't bother to shave."
Charles laughed out loud, knowing the last comment was supposed to be the ultimate insult.

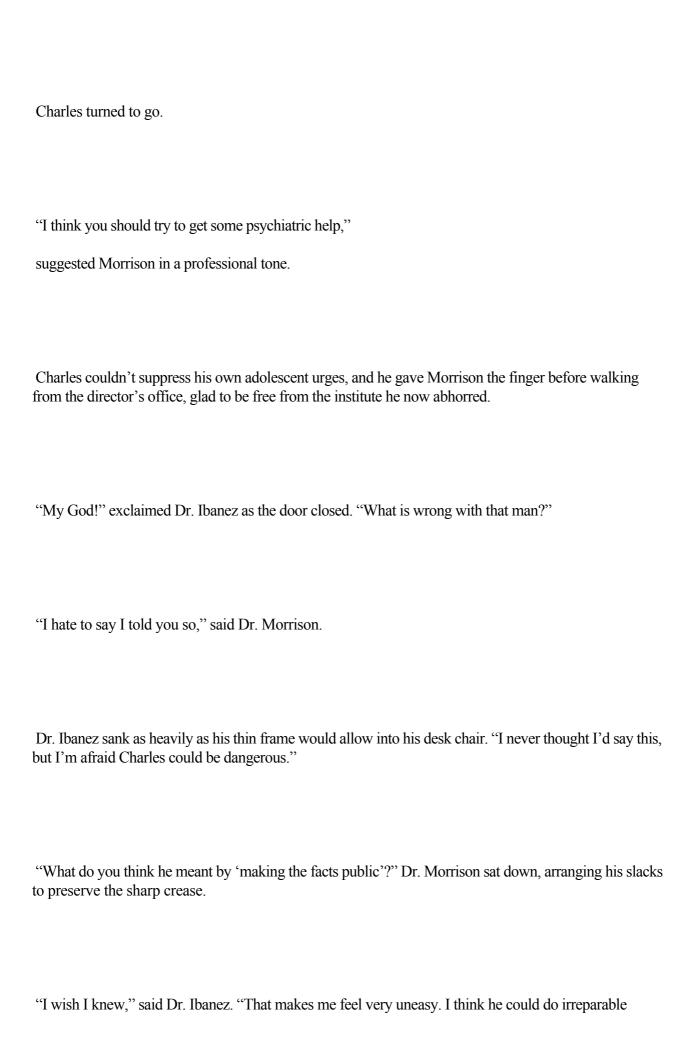


"Dr. Martel, I'm afraid you've given us no choice," said Dr. Ibanez, organizing his thoughts.
"Oh?" questioned Charles as if he was unaware of what was being implied.
"Yes," said Dr. Ibanez. "As I warned you yesterday and in accordance with the wishes of the board of directors, you're being dismissed from the Weinburger Institute."
Charles felt a mixture of anger and anxiety. That old nightmare of being turned out from his position had finally changed from fantasy to fact. Carefully hiding any sign of emotion, Charles nodded to indicate that he'd heard, then turned to leave.
"Just a minute, Dr. Martel," called Dr. Ibanez, standing up behind his desk.
Charles turned.
"I haven't finished yet," said Dr. Ibanez.

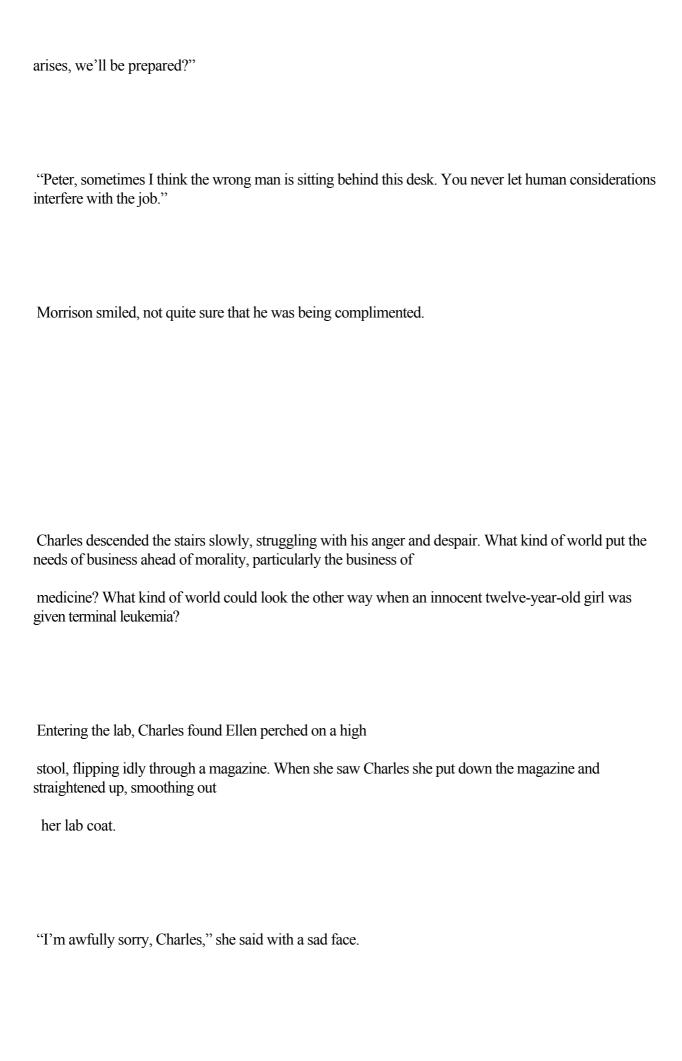
Charles looked at the two men, debating whether he wanted to stay or not. They no longer had any hold over him.
"For your own good, Charles," said Dr. Ibanez, "I think in the future you should recognize that you have certain legitimate obligations to the institution that supports you. You've been given almost free rein to pursue your scientific interests but, you must realize that you owe something in return."
"Perhaps," said Charles. He did not feel that Dr. Ibanez harbored the same ill will as Dr. Morrison.
"For instance," said Dr. Ibanez, "it's been brought to our attention that you have a complaint about Recycle, Ltd."
Charles's interest quickened.
"I think you should remember," continued Dr. Ibanez, "that Recycle and the Weinburger share a parent firm, Breur Chemicals. Recognizing this sibling association, I would have hoped that you would not have made any public complaints. If there is a problem, it should be aired internally and quietly rectified. That's how business works."
"Recycle has been dumping benzene into the river that goes past my house," snarled Charles. "And as a result, my daughter has terminal leukemia."













Locking the lab door from the inside, Charles went to work. Most of the important chemicals and reagents were stored in industrial quantities, so he began transferring them to smaller containers. Each container had to be carefully labeled, then stored in an almost empty locked

cabinet near the animal room. That took about an hour. Next Charles tackled his desk, looking for work tablets on which he'd outlined protocols for previous experiments. With those notes, he would be able to reconstruct his experiments even without the data in case Dr. Ibanez did not return his lab books.

While he was feverishly working, the phone rang. Quickly thinking what he'd say if it were the administration, he answered. He was relieved to find himself talking with a loan officer from the First National Bank. He told Charles that

his \$3,000 was ready and wanted to know if Charles wanted it deposited directly in his joint checking account. Charles told him no, he'd be over later to pick it up in person. Without letting go of the receiver, he disconnected and dialed Wayne Thomas. As he waited for the connection, he wondered what the loan officer would say if he learned that Charles had just been fired.

As he had before, Wayne Thomas himself answered. Charles told the lawyer the loan came through, and he'd bring the

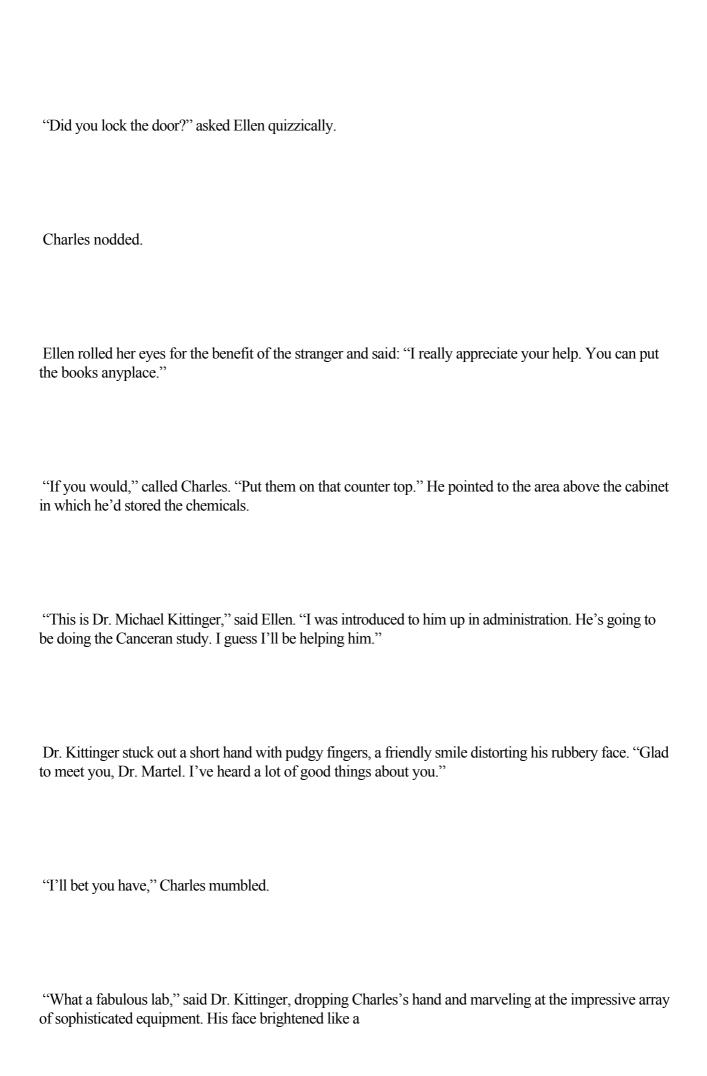
\$500 over that afternoon.

"That's cool, man," said Wayne. "I started working on the case without the retainer. I've already filed a restraining order against Recycle, Ltd. I'll know shortly when the hearing will be."

"Sounds good," said Charles, obviously pleased. On his own initiative, at least something was started.

Charles was almost finished with his desk when he heard someone try to open the door, and being unsuccessful slip a key into the lock. Charles swung around and was facing the door when Ellen entered. She was followed by a heavy young

man dressed in a tweed jacket. To Charles's satisfaction, she was carrying half of the lab books and the stranger the other half.





Charles grabbed the door and with excessive force, sent it swinging home. For a moment he stood with
his fists tightly clenched. He knew that he'd now made his isolation complete. He admitted there had
been no need to antagonize Ellen or his replacement. What worried Charles was that his irrational
behavior would undoubtedly be reported to the administration, and they in turn might cut down on the
two days he had left in the lab. He decided he'd have to work quickly. In fact, he'd have to make his
move that very night.

Returning to his work with renewed commitment, it took him another hour to arrange the lab so that everything he needed was organized into a single cabinet.

Donning his soiled coat, he left, locking the door behind him. When he passed Miss Andrews, he made it a point to say

"Hi" and inform her that he'd be right back. If the receptionist was reporting to Ibanez, he didn't want her thinking he was planning on being out for long.

It was after three, and the Boston traffic was building to

its pre-rush-hour frenzy. Charles found himself surrounded by

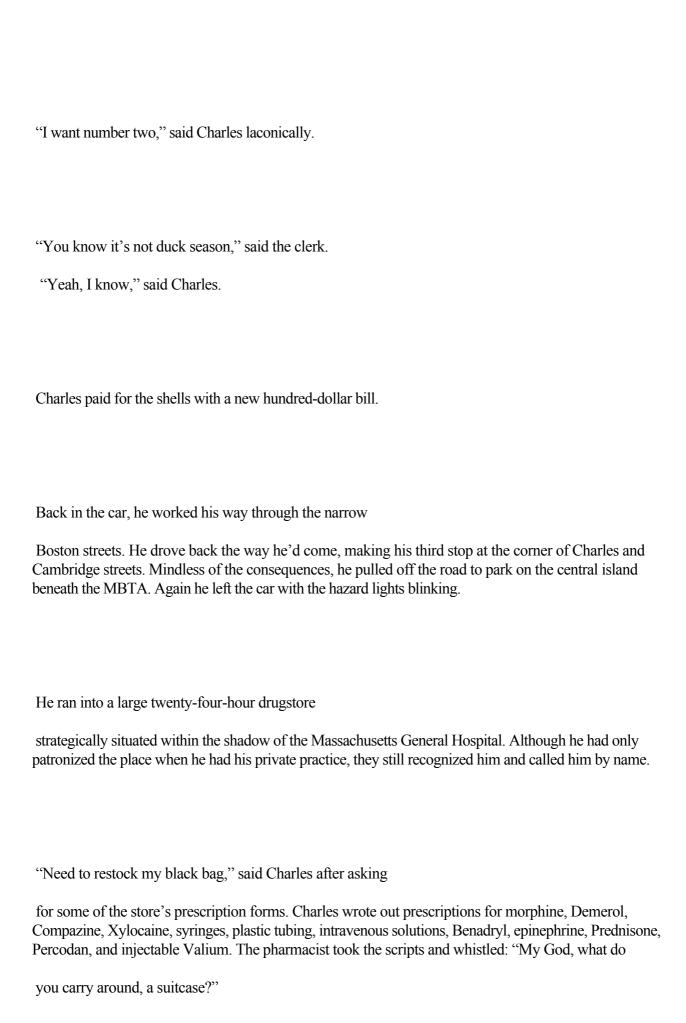
businessmen who risked their lives to get to Interstate 93

before Memorial and Storrow Drive ground to a halt.

His first stop was Charles River Park Plaza and the branch of the First National Bank. The vice president with whom Charles was passingly acquainted was not in, so Charles had to see a young woman he'd never met. He was aware that she eyed him suspiciously with his soiled jacket and

day-and-a-half growth of beard.

Charles put her at ease by saying, "I'm a scientist. We always dress a little" he deliberately left the sentence open-ended.
The bank officer nodded understandingly, although it took her a moment to compare Charles's present visage with the photo on his New Hampshire driver's license. Seemingly comfortable with the identification, she asked Charles if he wanted a check. He asked for the loan in cash.
"Cash?" Mildly flustered, the bank officer excused herself and disappeared into the back office to place a call to the assistant director of the branch. When she returned she was carrying thirty crisp hundred-dollar bills.
Charles retrieved his car and threaded his way into the tangled downtown shopping district behind Filene's and Jordan Marsh. Double-parking with his blinker lights on, Charles ran into a sporting goods shop where he was known. He bought a hundred rounds of twelve-gauge number two express shot for his shotgun.
"What's this for?" asked the clerk good-naturedly.
"Ducks," said Charles in a tone he'd hoped would discourage conversation.
"I think number four or five shot would be better," offered the clerk.



Charles gave a short laugh as if he appreciated the humor and paid with a hundred-dollar bill.
Removing a parking ticket from beneath his windshield
wiper, he got into the Pinto and eased into the traffic. He recrossed the Charles River, turning west on Memorial Drive. Passing the Weinburger, he continued to Harvard Square,
parked in a lot—being careful to leave his car in view of the attendant—and hurried over to 13 Brattle Street. He took the stairs at a run and knocked on Wayne Thomas's door.
The young attorney's eyes lit up when Charles handed over five crisp one-hundred-dollar bills.
"Man, you're going to get the best service money can buy,"
said Wayne.
He then told Charles that he'd managed to get an emergency hearing scheduled the next day for his restraining order on Recycle, Ltd.
Charles left the lawyer's office and walked a block south  to a Hertz rent-a-car bureau. He rented the largest van they had available. They brought the vehicle around and Charles climbed in. He drove slowly through Harvard Square, back to the parking lot where

he'd left the Pinto. After transferring the shotgun shells and the carton of medical supplies,

Charles got back in the van and drove to the Weinburger. He checked his watch: 4:30 P.M. He wondered how long he'd have to wait. He knew it would be dark soon.

## **TWELVE**

Cathryn stood up stiffly and stretched. Silently she moved over to where she could see herself in the mirror through the open door of Michelle's hospital bathroom. Even the failing afternoon light couldn't hide how awful she looked. The black eye she'd received from Charles's accidental blow had gravitated from the upper to the lower lid.

Getting a comb from her purse as well as some blush and a little lipstick, Cathryn stepped into the bathroom and slowly closed the door. She thought that a little effort might make her feel better. Flipping on the fluorescent light, she

looked into the mirror once again. What she saw startled her. Under the raw artificial light she looked frightfully pale, which only emphasized her black eye. But worse than her lack of color was her drawn, anxious look. At the corner of her mouth there were lines she'd never seen before.

After running the comb through her hair a few times,

Cathryn switched off the light. For a moment she stood in the darkness. She couldn't bear to look at herself a moment longer. It was too unsettling, and rather than making her

feel better, the makeup idea made her feel worse.

Fleeing to her mother's apartment in Boston's North End

had only eliminated the fear of Charles's violence; it had done nothing to relieve her agonizing uncertainty that

perhaps she'd made the wrong decision about the guardianship. Cathryn was terrified that her action would preclude his love for her after the nightmarish affair was over.

As silently as possible, Cathryn reopened the bathroom door and glanced over at the bed. Michelle had finally drifted off into a restless sleep, and even from where

Cathryn was standing, she could see the child's face twitch and tremble. Michelle had had a terrible day from the moment Cathryn had arrived that morning. She'd become weaker and weaker by the hour to the point that raising her arms and head were an effort. The small ulcers on her lips had coalesced, creating a large raw surface that pained her whenever she moved them. Her hair was coming out in thick clumps, leaving pale bald spots. But the worst part was her high fever and the fact that her lucid periods were rapidly diminishing.

Cathryn went back to her seat by Michelle's bed. "Why

hasn't Charles called?" she asked herself forlornly. Several times she had decided to call him at the institute, but each time, after picking up the phone, she changed her mind.

Gina had not been much help at all. Rather than being supportive and understanding, she'd taken the crisis as an opportunity to lecture Cathryn repeatedly on the evil of marrying someone thirteen years her senior with three children. She told Cathryn that she should have expected this kind of problem because even though Cathryn had graciously adopted the children, Charles obviously thought of them as

his alone.

Michelle's eyes suddenly opened and her face twisted in pain.

"What's wrong?" asked Cathryn, anxiously leaning forward on her seat.

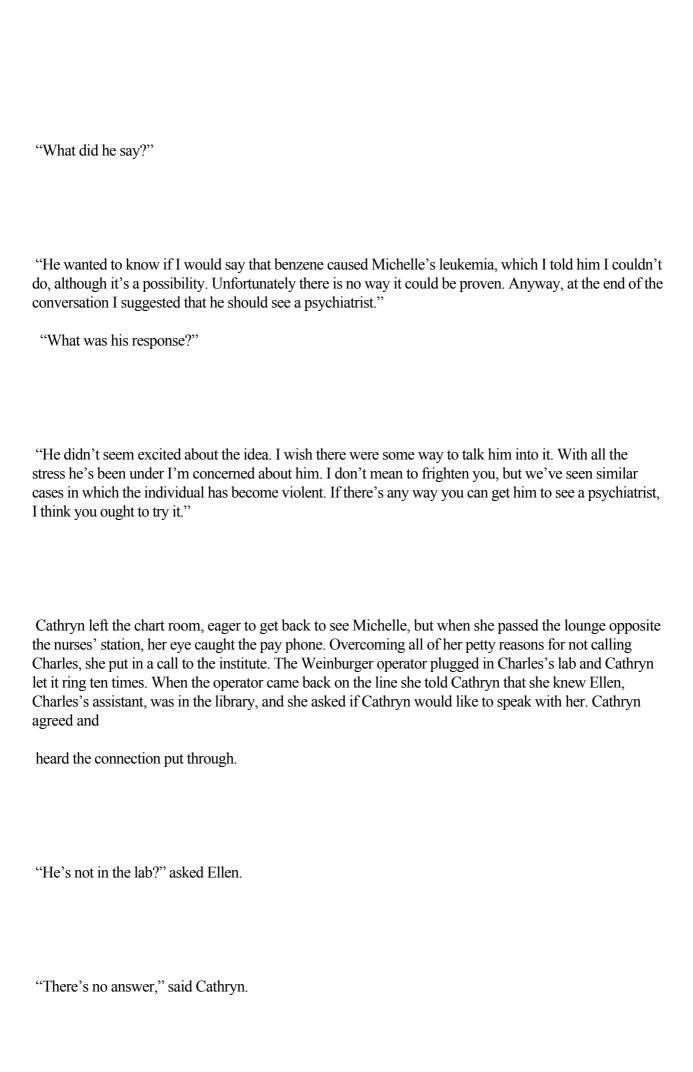
Michelle didn't answer. Her head flopped to the other side and her slender body writhed in pain.

Without a moment's hesitation, Cathryn was out the door, calling for a nurse. The woman took one look at Michelle's squirming body and put in a call to Dr. Keitzman.
Cathryn stood by the bed, wringing her hands, wishing there was something she could do. Standing there over the
suffering child was a torture. Without any clear idea why she
was doing it, Cathryn rushed into the bathroom and wet the
end of a towel. Returning to Michelle's bedside, she began to blot the child's forehead with the cool cloth. Whether it did anything for Michelle, Cathryn had no idea, but at least it gave her the satisfaction of doing something.
Dr. Keitzman must have been in the area because he arrived within minutes. Skillfully he examined the child. From the regular beep on the cardiac monitor, he knew that her heart rate had not changed. Her breathing was nonencumbered; her chest was clear. Putting the bell of the stethoscope on Michelle's abdomen, Dr. Keitzman listened. He heard a fanfare of squeaks, squawks, and tinkles. Removing the stethoscope, he put his hand on the child's abdomen, gently palpating.  When he straightened up he whispered something to the nurse who then quickly disappeared.
"Functional intestinal cramping," explained Dr. Keitzman to Cathryn, with relief. "Must be a lot of gas. I've ordered a shot that will give her instantaneous relief."
Heavily breathing through her mouth, Cathryn nodded. She sagged back into the seat.
Dr. Keitzman could see the woman's tormented appearance



no hint of a remission. She has the most aggressive case of myeloblastic leukemia I've ever seen, but we will not give up. In fact, we'll be adding another drug today that I and a few other oncologists have been cleared to use on an experimental basis. It's had promising results. Meanwhile I want to ask you if Michelle's two brothers can come in tomorrow for
typing to see if either one matches Michelle's. I think we're going to be forced to irradiate Michelle and give her a
marrow transplant."
"I think so," managed Cathryn. "I'll try."
"Good," said Dr. Keitzman, examining Cathryn's face. She felt his stare and looked away.
"That is quite a shiner you've got," said Dr. Keitzman sympathetically.
"Charles didn't mean it. It was an accident," said Cathryn quickly.
"Charles called me last night," said Dr. Keitzman.
"He did? From where?"

"Right here in the hospital."

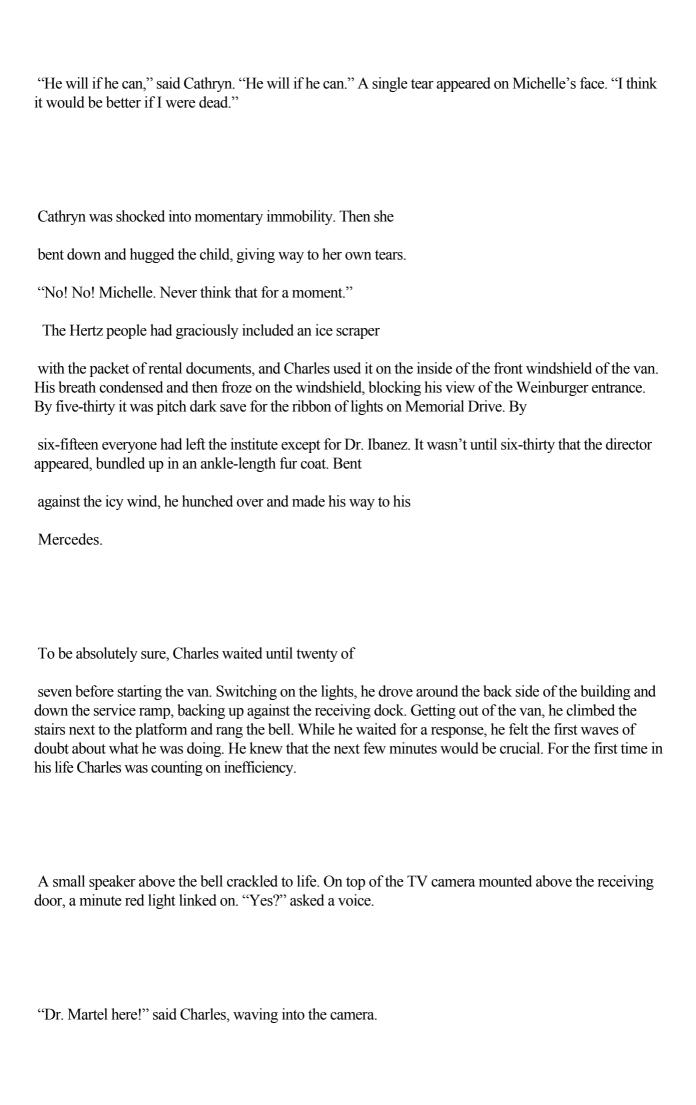




Cathryn walked back to Michelle's room, marveling how
quickly her previously secure world had collapsed around her. Why had Charles been fired? During the short time Cathryn had worked there, she'd learned that Charles was one of their
most respected scientists. What possibly could have happened? Cathryn had only one explanation. Maybe Dr. Keitzman was right. Maybe Charles was having a nervous breakdown and was now wandering aimlessly and alone, cut off from his family
and work. Oh God!
Slipping into Michelle's room as quietly as possible, Cathryn struggled to see the child's face in the faltering light. She hoped Michelle would be asleep. As her eyes
adjusted, she realized Michelle was watching her. She seemed too weak to lift her head. Cathryn went over to her and grasped her warm hand.
"Where's my daddy?" asked Michelle, moving her ulcerated lips as little as possible.
Cathryn hesitated, trying to think of how best to answer.
"Charles is not feeling too well because he's so worried about you."

"He told me last night he would come today," pleaded

Michelle.



"I've got to pick up some equipment."
A few minutes later the metal receiving door squeaked, then began a slow rise, exposing an unadorned, cement
receiving area. A long row of newly arrived cardboard boxes were stacked neatly to the left. In the rear of the area, an inner door opened, and Chester Willis, one of the two evening guards, stepped out. He was a seventy-two-year-old black
who'd retired from a city job and taken the job at the Weinburger, saying that he could watch TV at home, but at the Weinburger he got paid for it. Charles knew the real reason the man worked was to help a grandchild through medical school.
Charles had made it a habit over the years to work late into the evenings, at least before Chuck had become a day
student at Northeastern, and as a consequence, Charles had become friends with the night security officers.
"You workin' nights again?" asked Chester.
"Forced to," said Charles. "We're collaborating with a group at M.I.T. and I've got to move over some of my equipment. I don't trust anybody else to do it."
"Don't blame you," said Chester.
Charles breathed a sigh of relief. Security did not know he'd been fired.

Taking the larger of two dollies from receiving, Charles returned to his lab. He was pleased to find it untouched

since his departure, particularly the locked cabinet with his books and chemicals. Working feverishly, Charles dismantled most of his equipment and began loading it onto the dolly. It took him eight trips, with some help from Chester and Giovanni, to transport what he wanted from the lab down to receiving, storing it in the middle of the room.

The last thing he brought down from the lab was the vial

of Michelle's antigen which he'd stored in the refrigerator. He packed it carefully in ice within an insulated box. He had no idea of its chemical stability and did not want to take

any chances.

It was after nine when everything was ready. Chester raised the outside door, then helped Charles pack the equipment and chemicals into the van.

Before he left, Charles had one more task. Returning to

his lab he located a prep razor used for animal surgery. With the razor and a bar of hand soap he went to the lavatory and removed his day-and-a-half stubble. He also combed his hair, straightened his tie, and tucked his shirt properly into his pants. After he'd finished he examined himself in the

full-length mirror. Surprisingly, he looked quite normal. On the way back to the receiving area, he stepped into the main coatroom and picked up a long white laboratory coat.

When he got back outside, he buzzed once more and thanked

the two security men over the intercom for their help. Climbing into the cab, he admitted that he felt a

twinge of guilt at having taken advantage of his two old friends.

The drive over to Pediatric Hospital was accomplished with ease. There was virtually no traffic and the frigid weather had driven most people indoors. When he arrived at the hospital he faced a dilemma. Considering the value of the equipment jammed in the van, he was reluctant to leave the vehicle on the street. Yet pulling it into the parking garage would make a quick exit an impossibility. After debating for

a moment, he decided on the garage. If he were robbed, the whole plan would disintegrate. All he had to do was make sure a quick exit was not a necessity.

Charles parked within view of the attendant's booth and double-checked all the doors to be absolutely certain they

were locked. Having purposefully left his sheepskin jacket in the van, he put on the long white coat. It afforded little protection from the cold so he ran across to the hospital, entering through the busy emergency room.

Pausing at the check-in desk, Charles interrupted a

harried clerk to ask what floor radiology was on. The clerk told him it was on Anderson 2. Charles thanked him and pushed through the double doors into the hospital proper. He passed

a security guard and nodded. The guard smiled back.

Radiology was practically deserted. There seemed to be

only one technician on duty and she was busy with a backlog of sprained wrists and chest films from the packed emergency room. Charles went directly to the secretarial area and obtained an X-ray request form and letterhead from the department of radiology. Sitting down at one of the desks, he filled in the form: Michelle Martel, aged 12; diagnosis, leukemia; study requested: abdominal flat plate. From the stationery he selected one of the names of the radiologists and used it to sign the request form.

Back in the main corridor, Charles unlocked the wheel

stops on one of the many gurneys parked along the wall and pulled it out into the hall. From a nearby linen closet he obtained two fresh sheets, a pillow, and a pillow case. Working quickly, he made up the gurney, then pushed it past

the room manned by the single technician. He waited for the patient elevator, and when it came, he pushed the gurney in and pressed 6.

Watching the floor indicator jump from number to number, he experienced his second wave of doubt. So far everything had gone according to plan, but he admitted that what he'd

done to that point was the easy part. The hard part was going to begin when he arrived on Anderson 6.

The elevator stopped and the door folded open. Taking a deep breath, he pushed the gurney out into the quiet hall; visiting hours were long over and, as in most pediatric hospitals, the patients had been put to bed. The first obstacle was the nurses' station. At that moment there was

only one nurse, whose cap could just be seen over the counter top. Charles moved ahead, aware for the first time of the minor cacophony of squeaks emitted by the gurney's wheels. He tried altering the speed in hopes it would reduce the noise but without success. Out of the corner of his eye he watched the nurse. She didn't move. Charles passed the station and

the intensity of the light diminished as he entered the long hall.

"Excuse me," called the nurse, her voice shattering the stillness like breaking glass.

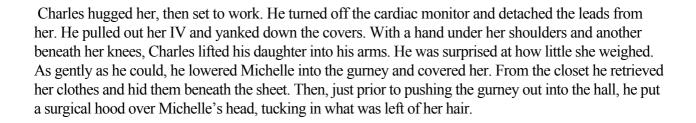
Charles felt a jolt of adrenaline shoot into his system, making his fingertips tingle. He turned and the nurse had stood up, leaning on the counter.



"Good idea, kind of work	"said Charles, turning back to the gurney. His hands were moist. He wasn't trained for the
	perate and rapid pace, Charles moved down the corridor, hoping the nurse did not feel make any confirming calls to either radiology or Dr. Keitzman.
He reached door. He cau	Michelle's room and, stepping around the front of the gurney, started to push open the 19th a
glimpse of a Cathryn.	a seated figure, head resting on the bed. It was
as he	rted his face, backed out of the room, and moved the door to its original position. As qui
	ppear. He wasn't sure if she'd seen him or not.
	anticipated her being with Michelle at that hour. He tried to think. He had to get Cathryn On the spur of the moment he could think of only one method, but it would mean working.
After waitin his steps	g a few minutes to be sure Cathryn was not coming out on her own, Charles swiftly retra
	treatment room, which was just before the nurses' station. He found surgical masks and scrub sink. He donned one of each and pocketed an extra hood.

Eyeing the nurses' station, he crossed the corridor to the
dark lounge area. In the far corner was a public telephone. He called the switchboard and asked for Anderson 6. In a few moments he could hear the phone ringing in the nurses' station.
A woman answered the phone, and Charles asked for Mrs. Martel, saying that it was an emergency. The nurse told him to hold the line.
Quickly he put down the receiver and moved to the doorway
of the lounge. Looking back at the nurses' station, he could see the charge nurse come into the corridor with an LPN. She pointed up the hall. Charles immediately left the lounge and scurried back down the hall, passing Michelle's room. In the shadow at the end of the hall, Charles waited. He could see the LPN walk directly toward him, then turn into Michelle's room. Within ten seconds she reappeared and Cathryn, rubbing her eyes, stumbled after her into the hall. As soon as the two women turned toward the nurses' station, Charles ran the gurney down to Michelle's room and pushed it through the half-open door.
Flipping on the wall switch, Charles pushed the gurney
over to the bed. Only then did he look down at his daughter. After twenty-four hours he could see she was perceptibly worse. Gently he shook her shoulder. She didn't respond. He shook her again but the child did not move. What would he do if she were in a coma?
"Michelle?" called Charles.





As he walked down toward the nurses' station he was

terrified Cathryn would appear. It was a long shot, but under the circumstances he could not think of any safer alternatives. He had to force himself to walk at a normal

pace rather than run to the elevator.

Cathryn had been sound asleep when the LPN touched her shoulder. All she had heard was that she was wanted on the telephone and that it was an emergency. Her first thought had been that something had happened to Charles.

When she got to the nurses' station the LPN had already disappeared. Not knowing what phone to use, Cathryn asked the charge nurse about her call. The woman looked up from her paperwork and, remembering the call, told Cathryn she could pick up the phone in the chart room.

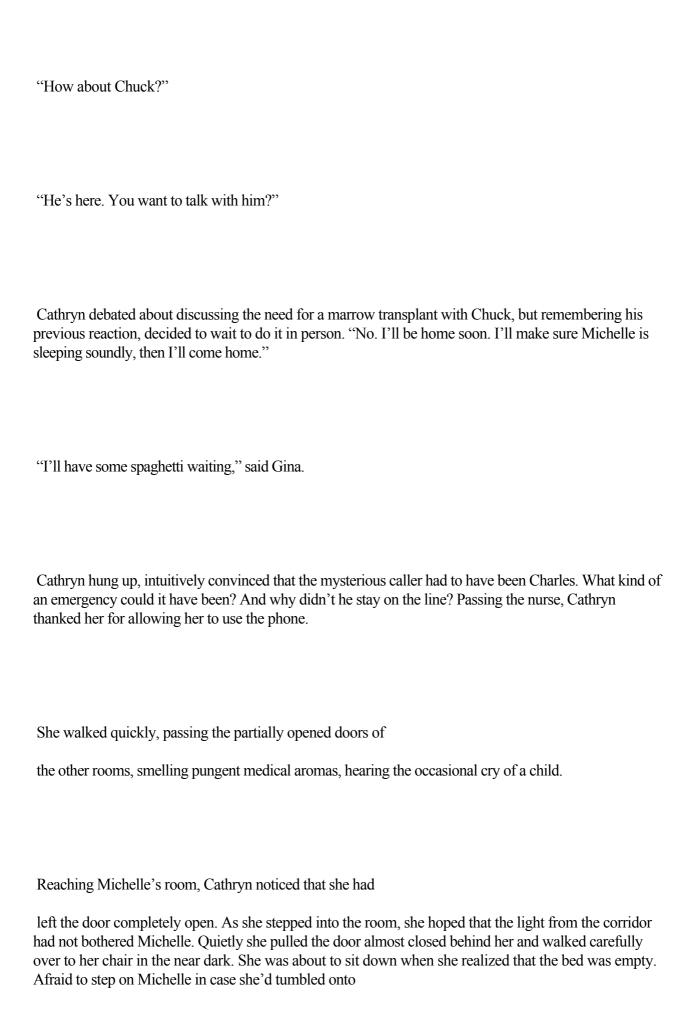
Cathryn said hello three times, each time louder than the last. But no one answered. She had waited and repeated

several hellos, but with no response. Depressing the disconnect button rapidly had no effect until she held it

down for an instant. When she released it, she was talking to the hospital operator.

The operator didn't know anything about a call to Anderson
6 for Mrs. Martel. Cathryn hung up and walked to the doorway leading to the nurses' station. The nurse was at the desk, bent over a chart. Cathryn was about to call out when she saw a vague figure in white, complete with surgical mask and
hood, push a patient across the dimly lit area in front of
the elevators. Cathryn, as sensitized as she was, felt a wave of sympathy for the poor child being taken to surgery at such a late hour. She knew that it had to be an emergency.
Fearful of intruding on the nurses' important tasks,
Cathryn tentatively called out to her. The nurse swung around in her chair, her face expectant.
"There wasn't anyone on the line," explained Cathryn.
"That's strange," said the nurse. "The caller said it was an emergency."
"Was it a man or a woman?" asked Cathryn.
"A man," said the nurse.
Cathryn wondered if it were Charles. Maybe he had gone



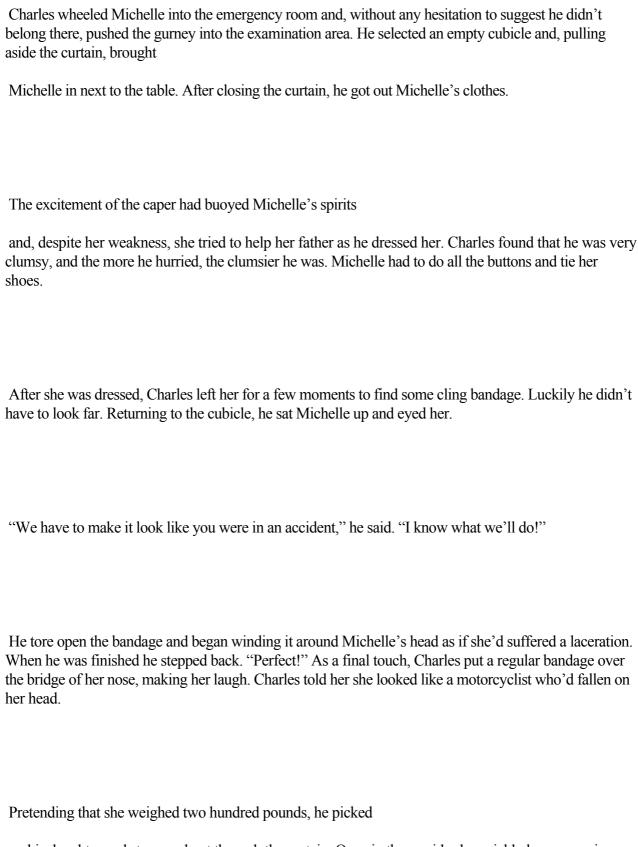


the polished vinyl and Cathryn immediately could see that Michelle was not there. In a panic, she hurried to the bathroom and turned on the light. Michelle was not there, either. Returning to the room, Cathryn switched on the overhead light. Michelle was not in the room! Cathryn ran out of the room and down the long hall, arriving back at the nurses' station out of breath. "Nurse! My daughter's not in her room! She's gone!" The charge nurse looked up from her writing, then down at her clipboard. "That's Martel?" "Yes! Yes! And she was there sleeping soundly when I came down here to answer the phone." "Our report from the day shift said she was very weak?" questioned the nurse. "That's the point," said Cathryn. "She might hurt herself." As if she thought Cathryn was lying, the nurse insisted on returning to Michelle's room. She glanced around the room and checked the bathroom. "You're right, she's not here."

Cathryn restrained herself from making any disparaging comments. The nurse put in a call to security

the floor, Cathryn quickly bent down and felt around the bed. The narrow shaft of hall light glistened on

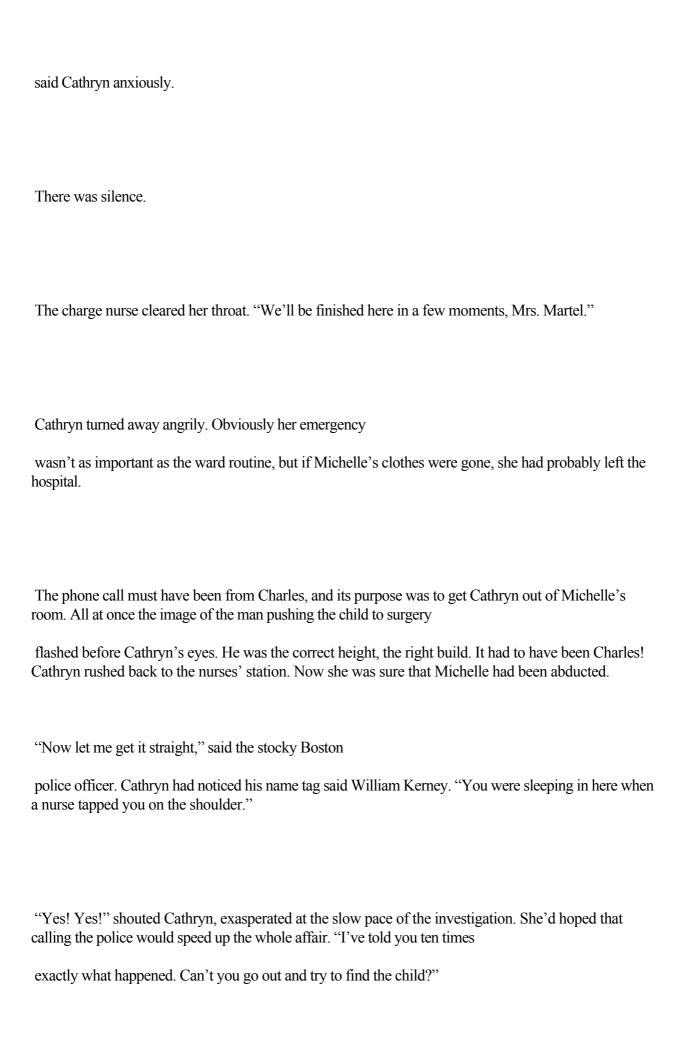
telling them that a twelve-year-old girl had vanished from Anderson 6. She also flipped on a series of small signal lights that called back the team of RNs and LPNs who'd been out working on the floor. She told them of Michelle's apparent disappearance and sent them back out to search all the rooms.
"Martel," said the charge nurse after the others had left.
"That rings a bell. What was the name of the child taken down to radiology for that emergency flat plate?"
Cathryn looked bewildered. For a moment she thought the woman was asking her the question.
"That's probably it," said the nurse, picking up the phone and dialing radiology. She had to let it ring almost twenty times before a harried technician picked it up.
"You're doing an emergency flat plate on a patient from Anderson 6," said the charge nurse. "What is the name of the child?"
"I haven't done any emergency flat plates," said the technician. "Must have been George. He's up in the OR doing a portable chest. He'll be back in a
minute and I'll have him call." The technician hung up before the charge nurse could respond.



up his daughter and staggered out through the curtain. Once in the corridor he quickly became serious, heading toward the entrance. To his satisfaction the emergency room had become even busier than when he'd first entered. Tearful children with all manner of cuts and bruises were waiting, while mothers with coughing infants queued up to check in. Amidst the confusion Charles was unnoticed. Only one nurse turned as Charles and Michelle passed by. When Charles caught her eye

he smiled and mouthed the words, "Thank you." She waved back self-consciously as if she thought she should recognize them but didn't.
Approaching the exit, Charles saw a uniformed security man jump up from the nearby chair. Charles's heart fluttered, but the man didn't challenge them; instead he scurried to the door and said: "Hope she's feeling better. Have a good night."
With a welcome sense of freedom, Charles carried Michelle out of the hospital. Quickening his steps, he hurried to the parking garage, settled Michelle in the van, paid his parking fee, and drove off.
THIRTEEN  Cathryn tried to be both patient and understanding, but as time passed she became increasingly nervous. She castigated herself for leaving Michelle to answer the telephone. She should have had the call transferred directly to Michelle's room.
As she paced the lounge, she involuntarily thought about Michelle's comment: "I think it would be better if I were dead." She'd initially put the statement out of her mind, but now that Michelle had not reappeared, it kept coming back to haunt her. Cathryn had no idea if Michelle could do herself harm but, having heard all sorts of grisly stories, she could not dismiss her fear.
Checking her watch, Cathryn walked out of the lounge and approached the nurses' station. How could a hospital lose a sick twelve-year-old child who was so weak she could barely walk?

"Any news?" asked Cathryn, directing her question to the evening charge nurse. There were now a half dozen nurses sitting around the station chatting casually.
"Not yet," said the nurse, interrupting a discussion with a colleague. "Security has checked all the stairwells. I'm
still waiting for a call from radiology. I'm sure Martel was the name of the child radiology came and picked up."
"It's been almost a half hour," said Cathryn. "I'm terrified. Could you call radiology again?"
Not bothering to hide her irritation, the nurse called
again and told Cathryn that the radiology technician had not come back from the OR but that he'd call when he did.
Cathryn turned away from the nurses' station, acutely
aware how the medical people intimidated her. She was furious at the hospital, yet was unable to show her anger no matter how justified she thought it was. Instead she thanked the nurse and wandered back down to Michelle's empty room. Absentmindedly she looked into the bathroom again, avoiding her reflection in the mirror. Next to the bathroom was the closet, and Cathryn looked inside. She had the door almost closed when she reopened it and stared, dumbfounded.
Running back to the nurses' station, she tried to get the charge nurse's attention. The nurses from the
evening shift who were going off duty and the night nurses who were coming on duty were grouped around the center of the nurses' station having their inviolable report. It was a time when
emergencies were proscribed, medical or otherwise. Cathryn had to yell to get attention.
"I just discovered my daughter's clothes are missing,"



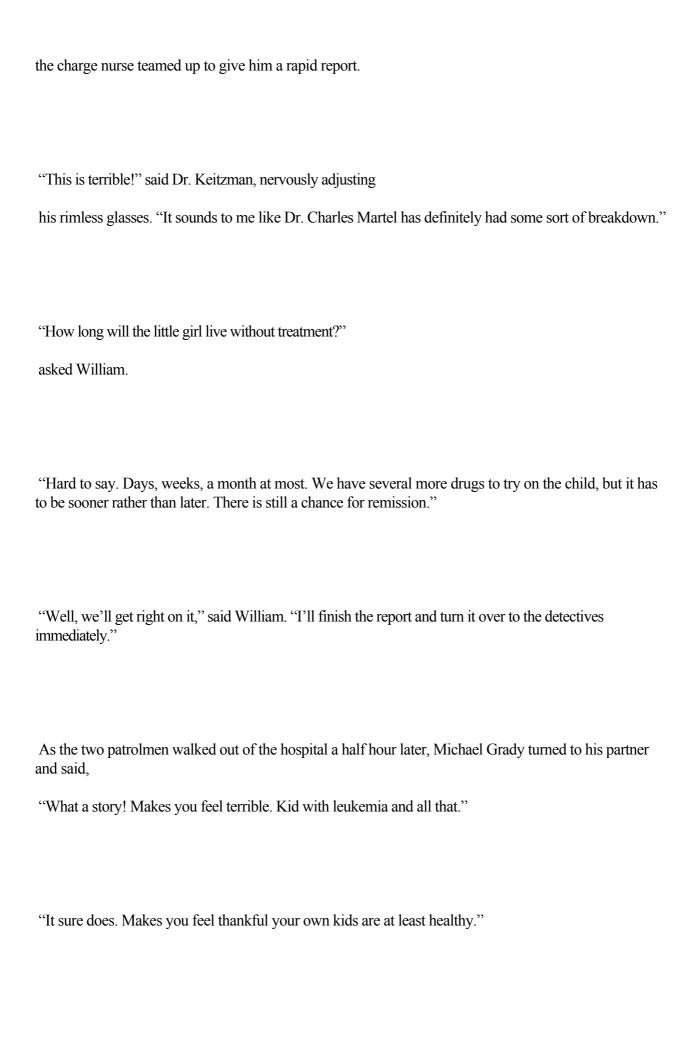
a weath	ave to finish our report," explained William. He held ner-beaten clipboard in the crook of his left arm. In his right hand he struggled with a pencil, the end every so often.
evening	oup was standing in Michelle's vacant room. It included Cathryn, two Boston police officers, the charge nurse, and the assistant administrator. The strator was a tall, handsome man, dressed in an elegant gray business suit. He had a curious habit ng after each sentence, reducing his eyes to narrow slits. His face
	priously tan as if he'd just returned from a vacation in the Caribbean.
"How l	ong were you out of the room?" asked William.
"I told	you," snapped Cathryn. "Five minutes ten minutes. I don't know exactly."
"Uh hu	h," murmured William, printing the answer.
	el Grady, the other Boston police officer, was
_	the temporary guardianship papers. When he finished, he handed them to the administrator. "It's natching case. No doubt about it."

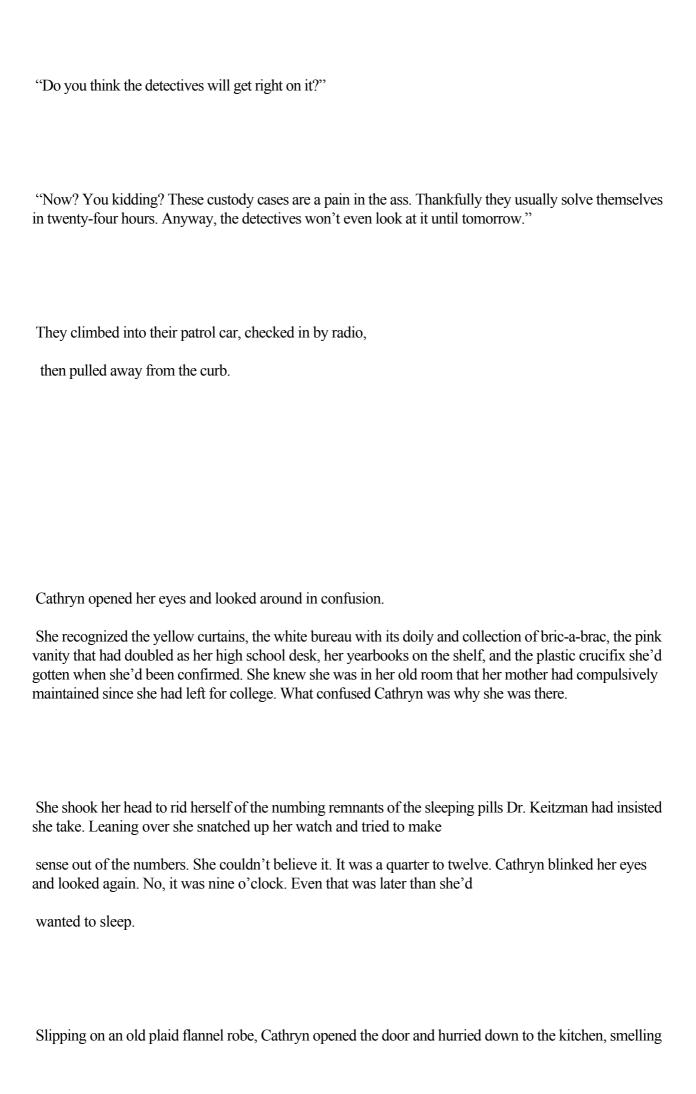


The nurse looked up toward the ceiling. "Medium height, medium build, brown hair"
"That's not too specific," said William.
"What about his blue eyes?" asked Cathryn.
"I didn't notice his eyes," said the nurse.
"What was he wearing?" asked William.
"Oh God!" exclaimed Cathryn in frustration. "Please do something."
"A long white coat," said the nurse.
"Okay," said William. "Someone calls, gets Mrs. Martel out of the child's room, presents a bogus X-ray request, then wheels the child off as if he's going to surgery. Right?"

Everyone nodded except Cathryn who had put a hand to her forehead to try to control herself.
"Then, how long before security was notified?" asked
William.
"Just a couple of minutes," said the nurse.
"That's ruly, wa think they are still in the hamital" said the administrator
"That's why we think they are still in the hospital," said the administrator.
"But her clothes are gone," said Cathryn. "They've left
the hospital. That's why you have to do something before it's too late. Please!"
Everyone looked at Cathryn as if she were a child. She returned their stares then threw up her hands in exasperation. "Jesus Christ."
William turned to the administrator. "Is there someplace in the hospital someone could take a child?" he asked.
"There are lots of temporary hiding places," agreed the administrator. "But there's no place they won't
be found."







the aroma of
fresh biscuits and bacon. When she entered, her mother looked up, pleased to have her daughter home no matter what the reason.
"Has Charles called?" asked Cathryn.
"No, but I've fixed you a nice breakfast."
"Has anybody called? The hospital? The police?"
"No one has called. So relax. I made your favorite, baking-powder biscuits."
"I can't eat," said Cathryn, her mind a whirl. But she wasn't too preoccupied to see her mother's face immediately fall. "Well, maybe some biscuits."
Gina perked up and got out a cup and saucer for Cathryn.
"I'd better get Chuck up," said Cathryn, starting back to the hall.  "He's up, breakfasted, and gone," said Gina triumphantly.  "The librar historia as much as you. Said he had a nine a'cleak aleas."
"He likes biscuits as much as you. Said he had a nine o'clock class."

Cathryn turned and sat down at the table while her mother poured the coffee. She felt useless. She'd tried so hard to be a wife and mother and now she had the feeling that she'd bungled it. Getting her adopted son up for school was hardly the criterion for being a good mother, yet the fact that she'd not done it seemed representative of her whole incompetent performance.
Battling her emotions, she lifted the coffee cup to her mouth, mindless of its temperature. As she took a sip, the hot fluid scalded her lips and she pulled the cup away, sloshing some of the fluid on her hand. Burned, she released her grasp on the mug and let it go. The cup fell to the table, shattering itself and the saucer. At the same moment, Cathryn broke into tears.
Gina quickly had the mess cleaned up, and repeatedly reassured her daughter that she shouldn't cry because Gina  didn't care about any old cup that she'd bought as a souvenir in Venice on her only trip to that beautiful city that she loved more than any place in the world.
Cathryn got control of herself. She knew that the Venetian cup was one of her mother's treasures and she felt badly about breaking it, but Gina's overreaction helped calm down her emotions.
"I think I'll drive up to Shaftesbury," said Cathryn at length. "I'll get some more clothes for Chuck and check on Jean Paul."
"Chuck's got what he needs," said Gina. "The money it costs to drive up there, you could buy him a new outfit in

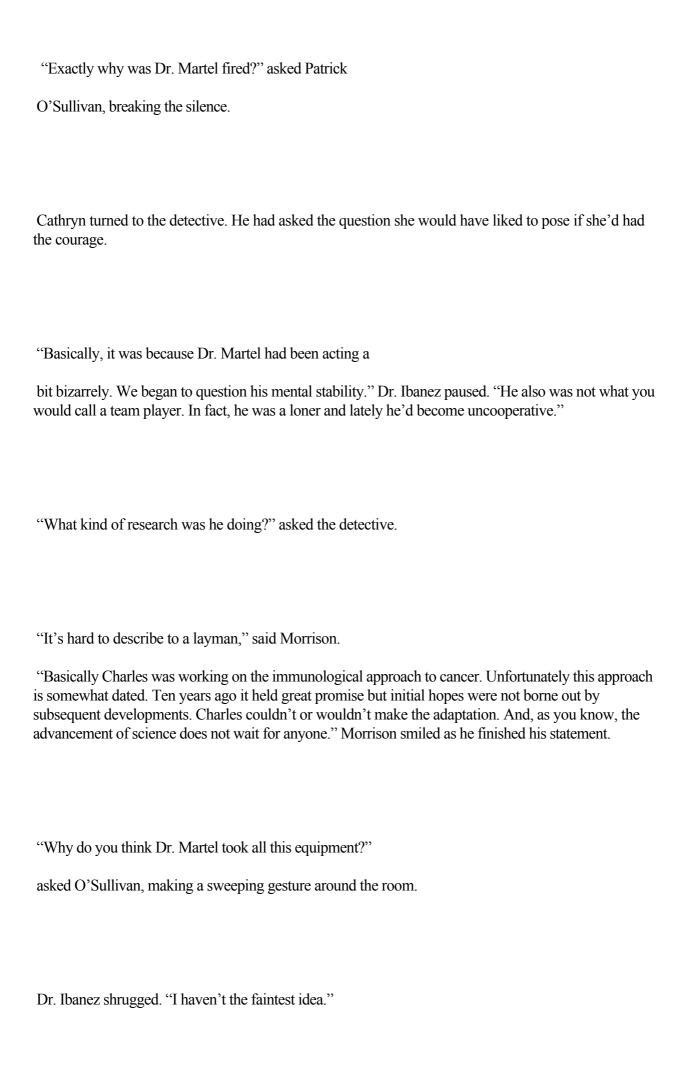


Expecting the worst, Cathryn picked up the phone. Patrick O'Sullivan quickly reassured her, saying that they had no new information about Charles or Michelle. He said that there had been an interesting development in the case and asked if Cathryn would meet him at the Weinburger Research Institute. She agreed immediately.
Fifteen minutes later she was ready to leave. She told  Gina that after stopping at the Weinburger she was going to drive back to New Hampshire. Gina tried to protest but Cathryn was insistent, saying that she had to have some time alone. She told her mother that she'd be back in time for dinner with Chuck.
The ride across Boston and down Memorial Drive was uneventful. Pulling the old Dodge into the Weinburger parking lot made her remember that summer two years before when she'd met Charles for the first time. Could it really have been only two years ago?
There were two police cars pulled up close to the entrance and when Cathryn walked by them she could hear the familiar crackle of their radios. Seeing police cars wasn't an auspicious sign, but Cathryn refused to allow herself to speculate. The front door of the institute slid open for her, and she made her way down to Charles's lab.
The door was ajar and Cathryn walked in. The first thing she noticed was that the lab had already been dismantled.  She'd been in it on several occasions in the past, so she'd had an idea of what to expect. Now all the





C	Cathryn looked back at the detective.
	The detective glanced down and shuffled his feet. "This puts a different light on your husband's sappearance.
	Child-snatching by a parent is one thing, and to tell you the honest truth, we don't get too excited about But theft is something else. We're going to have to put out the details
aı	nd a warrant for Dr. Martel's arrest on the NCIC teletype."
	On the many about down of the country of the countr
	Cathryn shuddered. Every time she thought she understood ne details of the nightmare it got worse. Charles was now a fugitive. "I don't know what to say."
"(	Our condolences, Mrs. Martel," said Dr. Ibanez, coming up behind her.
S	he turned and saw the director's sympathetic expression.
	It's a tragedy," agreed Dr. Morrison with the same expression. "And to think Charles was once such a comising researcher."
	There was an uncomfortable pause. Morrison's comment angered Cathryn, but she was at a loss for ords.

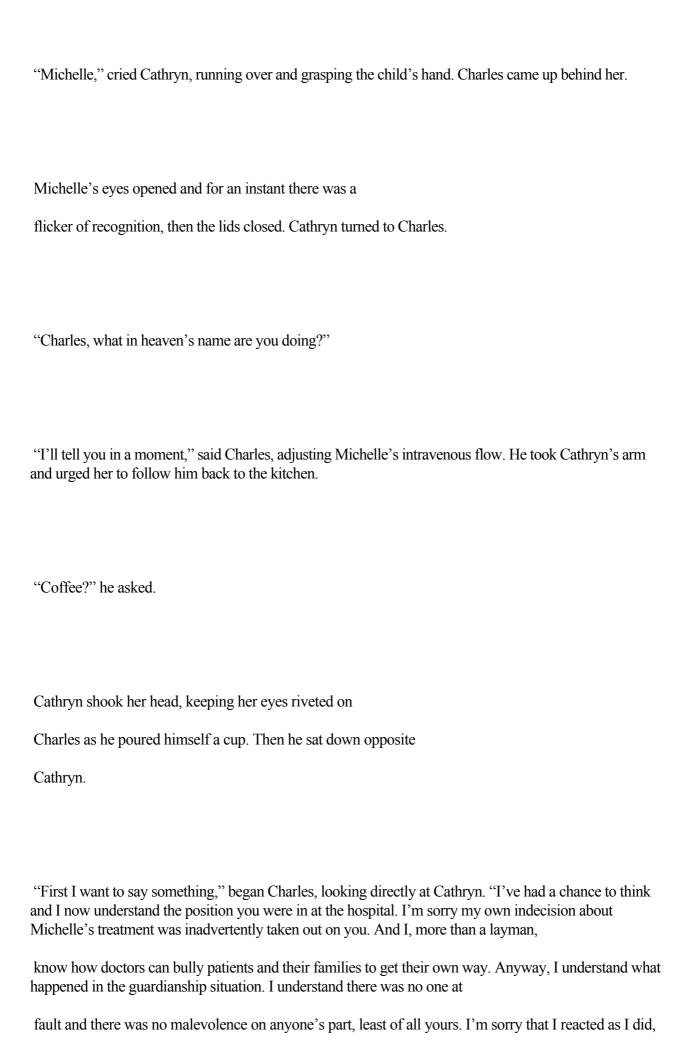


"I think it was spite," said Dr. Morrison. "It's like the kid who takes home his ball when the others don't want to play by his rules."
"Could Dr. Martel have taken the equipment to continue his research?" said O'Sullivan.
"No," said Dr. Morrison. "Impossible! The key to this kind of research is the highly bred animal systems we use. These animals are absolutely essential to the research, and Charles did not take any of his mice. And as a fugitive, I think he'd find it difficult to get them."
"I suppose you could give me a list of suppliers," said the detective.  "Absolutely," answered Dr. Morrison.
In the background the phone rang. Cathryn had no idea why she jumped but she did. Ellen answered it and called out for Detective O'Sullivan.
"This must be a very difficult time for you," said Dr. Ibanez to Cathryn.
"You have no idea," agreed Cathryn.

"If we can help in any way," said Dr. Morrison.
Cathryn tried to smile.
Patrick O'Sullivan came back. "Well, we've found his car. He left it in a parking lot in Harvard Square."
As Cathryn drove along Interstate 301 she felt
increasingly unhappy. The reaction surprised her because one of the reasons she'd wanted to go home, besides being close to the phone in case Charles called, was to lift her spirits. She appreciated her mother's efforts to help, but she also resented Gina's disapproving comments about Charles and her self-righteous attitude. Having been abandoned herself, Gina had a low regard for men in general, particularly
nonreligious men like Charles. She'd never been
wholeheartedly behind Cathryn's marriage, and she let Cathryn know how she felt.
So Cathryn had looked forward to getting back to her own home although she realized it would no longer be the happy
refuge she knew. Coming upon their property, Cathryn took her foot off the accelerator and braked. The first thing she saw was the mailbox. It had been knocked over and crushed. She started up the drive, moving between the rows of trees which in the summer formed a long gallery of shade. Through the
now-naked branches Cathryn could see the house, stark white against the dark shadow of evergreens

behind the barn.
Pulling the station wagon to a point opposite the back
porch, Cathryn turned off the ignition. As she looked at the house she thought how cruel life could be. It seemed that one episode could initiate a chain reaction like a series of dominoes standing on end, each inevitably knocking over the next. As Cathryn got out of the car, she noticed the door to the playhouse was swinging in the wind, repeatedly thumping against the outside shingles. Looking more closely, she could see that most of the small panes of glass in the mullioned windows had been broken. Retrieving her keys, she walked through the snow to the back door, turned her key, and
stepped into the kitchen.
Cathryn screamed. There was a sudden movement, and a figure came from behind the door and lunged at her.
In the next instant, she was pushed up against the kitchen wall. The door crashed shut with a concussion that made the old frame house shudder.
Cathryn's scream faltered and trailed off in her throat.
It was Charles! Speechless, she watched while he frantically ran from window to window, looking outside. In his right hand he held his old twelve-gauge shotgun. Cathryn noticed the windows had been crudely boarded up and Charles had to peer out between the cracks.
Before she could recover her equilibrium, Charles grabbed her arm and forced her rapidly out of the kitchen, stumbling down the short hall into the living room. Then he let go of her and again ran from window to window, looking out.











Cathryn swallowed. For the first moment in the
conversation a red flag went up, questioning Charles's state of mind.
"That idea surprises you," he said. "Well, it shouldn't.
In the past most great medical researchers used themselves as experimental subjects. Anyway, let me try to explain to you what I am doing. First of all my research has advanced to the point where I can take a cancerous cell from an organism and isolate a protein, or what is called an antigen, on its surface, which makes that cell different from all the other
cells. That, in itself, is a major advance. My problem then was getting the organism's immune system to react to the protein and therefore rid itself of the abnormal cancerous cells. This, I believe, is what happens in normal organisms. I think cancer is a fairly frequent occurrence but that the
body's immune system takes care of it. When the immune system fails, that's when a particular cancer takes root and grows. Do you understand so far?"
Cathryn nodded.
"When I tried to get the cancerous animals to respond to
the isolated protein, I couldn't. I think there is some kind of blocking mechanism and that's where I was when Michelle got sick. But then I got the idea to inject the isolated surface antigen into well animals to make them immune to it. I didn't have time to carry out the tests but I'm certain it would be easy because the well animal will recognize the antigen as being very foreign to itself whereas in the sick
animal the antigen is only slightly different from its normal proteins."

Cathryn's comprehension faltered, though she tried to smile.

Charles impulsively reached across the table and grasped Cathryn's shoulders. "Cathryn, try to understand. I want you to believe in what I'm doing. I need you to help me."
Cathryn felt some inner bond loosen and fall. Charles was her husband and the fact that he needed her and admitted it was a tremendous incentive.
"Do you remember that horses were used to make diphtheria antiserum?" asked Charles.
"I think so," said Cathryn.
"What I'm explaining to you is something like that. What I've done is to isolate the surface antigen of Michelle's leukemic cells that makes them different from her normal cells, and I've been injecting the antigen into myself."
"So you become allergic to Michelle's leukemic cells?" asked Cathryn, struggling to comprehend.
"Exactly," said Charles with excitement.



Cathryn glanced around the kitchen, noting aga	in the
boarded windows. Turning back to Charles, sh for you. They think you've fled to Mexico to ge	ne said: "I guess you know the Boston police are looking at Laetrile."
Charles laughed. "That's absurd. And they can know very well that I'm here. Did you notice th	a't be looking for me too hard because our local police e mailbox and the playhouse?"
"I saw that the mailbox was crushed and the w	vindows were broken in the playhouse."
	night a group came up from Recycle, Ltd. bent on d never showed up until I noticed one of the squad cars ed the whole thing."
"Why?" asked Cathryn, aghast.	
"I retained a young aggressive lawyer and appa think they believe they can frighten me into callin	rently he's successfully giving Recycle some trouble. I ng him off."
"My God!" exclaimed Cathryn, beginning to a	ppreciate the extent of Charles's isolation.
"Where are the boys?" asked Charles.	



"Recycle just gave me something to do. The most frustrating part of Michelle's illness was that I couldn't do anything, which is what happened with Elizabeth. Back then all I could do was watch her die, and it seemed as if it was going to be the same situation with Michelle. I needed something to focus on, and Recycle galvanized my need for action. But my anger about what they're doing is real enough, as well as my commitment to get them to stop. But obviously my main interest is Michelle, otherwise I wouldn't be here now." Cathryn felt as if she'd been freed from an enormous weight. She was now certain that Charles had never lost contact with reality. "What about Michelle's condition?" asked Cathryn. "Not good," admitted Charles. "She's a terribly sick child. It's amazing how aggressive her disease is. I've given her morphine because she's had awful stomach cramps." Charles embraced Cathryn again and averted his face. "She had some while I was with her, too," said Cathryn. She could feel Charles tremble as he fought back his tears. Cathryn held him as tightly as she could. They stood together for another five minutes. There were no words but the communication was total. Finally Charles

pulled away. When he turned back she saw that his eyes were red, his expression serious.

"I'm glad we had the opportunity to talk," said Charles.
"But I don't think you should stay here. Without doubt there will be trouble. It's not that I don't want you to be with me; in fact, selfishly I'd like you to stay. But I know it would be better if you got Jean Paul and went back to your mother's." Charles nodded his head as if he were convincing himself.
"I want you to be selfish," said Cathryn. She experienced
a new sense of confidence that she could be a wife. "My place is here. Jean Paul and Chuck will be all right."
"But Cathryn"
"No buts," said Cathryn. "I'm staying and I'm helping." Charles examined his wife's face. She looked positively defiant.
"And if you think," she continued with a vehemence that he had never seen, "that you can get rid of me now that you've convinced me what you're doing is right, you are crazy! You'll have to throw me out
bodily."
"All right, all right," said Charles with a smile. "I
won't throw you out. But we could be in for a rough time."
"It's as much my responsibility as yours," said Cathryn with conviction. "This is a family affair and I'm part of

this family. We both recognized that when we decided to get married. I'm not here just to share the happiness."
Charles experienced a mixture of emotions, but the primary one was pride. He had been guilty of not giving Cathryn the credit she deserved. She was right; Charles had tried whenever it was possible to shield her from the negative aspects of their life, and that was wrong. He should have been more open, more trusting. Cathryn was his wife, not his child.
"If you want to stay, please do," he said.
"I want to stay," said Cathryn simply.
Charles kissed her gently on the lips. Then he stepped back to look at her with an admiring eye.
"You really can help," he said, checking his watch. "It's almost time to give myself another dose of Michelle's antigen. I'll explain what you can do to help after I get it prepared. Okay?"  Cathryn nodded and let Charles squeeze her hand before he walked back to the living room.
Holding on to the back of one of the kitchen chairs,
Cathryn felt a little dizzy. Everything that had happened in the last several days was unexpected. There had never been a moment that she'd thought Charles would have taken Michelle to their home. She wondered if there were some way to cancel the guardianship proceedings and eliminate one of the reasons Charles was being sought by the police.

Picking up the phone, she dialed her mother. While she waited for the connection, she realized that if she told her mother that Charles was there it would precipitate an argument, so she decided to say nothing.
Gina answered on the second ring. Cathryn kept the conversation light, not mentioning her visit to the Weinburger or the fact that Charles was suspected of grand larceny. When there was a pause, she cleared her throat and said: "Provided you don't mind seeing that Chuck gets some dinner and gets off to school in the morning, I think I'll spend the night here. I want to be available in case Charles calls."
"Honey, don't feel that you have to sit around and wait for that man. I tell you, he'll call here if there's no answer at your house. Besides, I've been planning on having a wonderful dinner tonight. Try and guess what I'm making."
Cathryn let out her breath in a quiet sigh. It never failed to amaze her that her mother always believed that a good meal could fix everything.
"Mother, I don't want to guess what you are having for dinner. I want to stay here tonight in my own home."
Cathryn could tell she'd hurt her mother's feelings, but under the circumstances she didn't feel she had much choice. As quickly as she could without seeming to be rude, Cathryn hung up.

Thinking of food, Cathryn checked the refrigerator. Except for being low on milk and eggs, they were reasonably well
stocked, especially with the old-fashioned root cellar in the basement. Closing the refrigerator, Cathryn looked around her boarded-up kitchen, marveling at being a prisoner in her own house.
She wondered about Charles's treatment for Michelle. She acknowledged that she didn't understand its details, but it sounded good. At the same time, she recognized that if she were with Dr. Keitzman, she'd probably believe what he said. Medicine was too complicated for her to feel confident enough to question the experts. As a lay person she was put in an impossible situation when the doctors disagreed.
When she went into the living room, Charles was holding a syringe with its needle up, tapping it with his index finger to get rid of air bubbles. Quietly she took a seat and watched. Michelle was still sleeping, her thin hair splayed out on the white pillow. Through the boards on the windows, Cathryn could see it was snowing again. In the basement, she could hear the oil burner kick on.
"Now I'm going to inject this into my arm vein," said Charles, looking for a tourniquet. "I don't suppose you'd be willing to do it for me."
Cathryn felt her mouth go dry. "I can try," she said reluctantly. In truth she wanted no part of the syringe. Even looking at it made her feel faint.

"Would you?" asked Charles. "Unless you're an addict, it's harder than hell to stick yourself in a vein. Also I want to tell you how to give me epinephrine if I need it. With the first intravenous dose of Michelle's antigen, I developed some anaphylaxis, meaning an allergic reaction which makes breathing difficult."

"Oh, God," said Cathryn to herself. Then to Charles she said: "Isn't there another way to take the antigen, like eating it?"
Charles shook his head. "I tried that but stomach acid breaks it down. I even tried sniffing a powdered form like cocaine, but the mucous membrane in my nose swelled unbelievably. Since I'm in a hurry I decided I'd have to  mainline it. The problem is that my body's first response has been to develop a simple allergy, what they call immediate hypersensitivity. I've tried to cut down on that effect by altering the protein slightly. I want delayed hypersensitivity, not immediate."
Cathryn nodded as if she understood, but she'd comprehended nothing except the cold feel of the syringe. She held it with her fingertips as if she expected it to injure her. Charles brought a chair over and placed it in front of hers. On a counter top within reach he put two smaller syringes.
"These other syringes are the epinephrine. If I suddenly go red as a beet and can't breathe, just jam one of these into any muscle and inject. If there's no response in thirty seconds, use the next one."
Cathryn felt a strange terror. But Charles seemed blithely unconcerned. He unbuttoned his sleeve and rolled it up above his elbow. Using his teeth to hold one end of the tourniquet, Charles applied the rubber tubing to his own upper arm. Quickly his veins engorged and stood out.
"Take off the plastic cover," instructed Charles, "then just put the needle into the vein."

With visibly trembling hands, Cathryn got the cover off
the needle. Its sharp point glistened in the light. Charles tore open an alcohol pad with his right hand, holding the packet in his teeth. Vigorously he swabbed the area.
"Okay, do your stuff," said Charles looking away.
Cathryn took a breath. Now she knew why she'd never considered medicine as a career. Trying to hold the syringe steady she put the needle on Charles's skin and gently pushed. The skin merely indented.
"You have to give it a shove," said Charles, still looking away.
Cathryn gave the syringe a little push. It indented
Charles's skin a little more.
Charles looked down at his arm. Reaching around with his free hand he gave the needle a sudden forceful lunge and it broke through the skin, impaling the vein.
"Perfect," he said. "Now draw back on the plunger without disturbing the tip."
Cathryn did as Charles asked and some bright red blood swished into the syringe.



blotching with hives, pointed to his left upper arm. Holding her breath, Cathryn jammed the needle into
the muscle. This time she used ample force. She pressed the plunger and pulled it out. Quickly she
discarded the used syringe, and picked up the first one, trying to straighten the bent needle. She was
about to give it to Charles when he held up his hand.

"It's okay," he managed, his voice still abnormal. "I can

already feel the reaction subsiding. Whew! Good thing you were here."

Cathryn put down the syringe. If she thought she was trembling before, now she was shaking. For Cathryn, using a needle on Charles had been the supreme test.

## **FOURTEEN**

By nine-thirty they were settling in for the night.

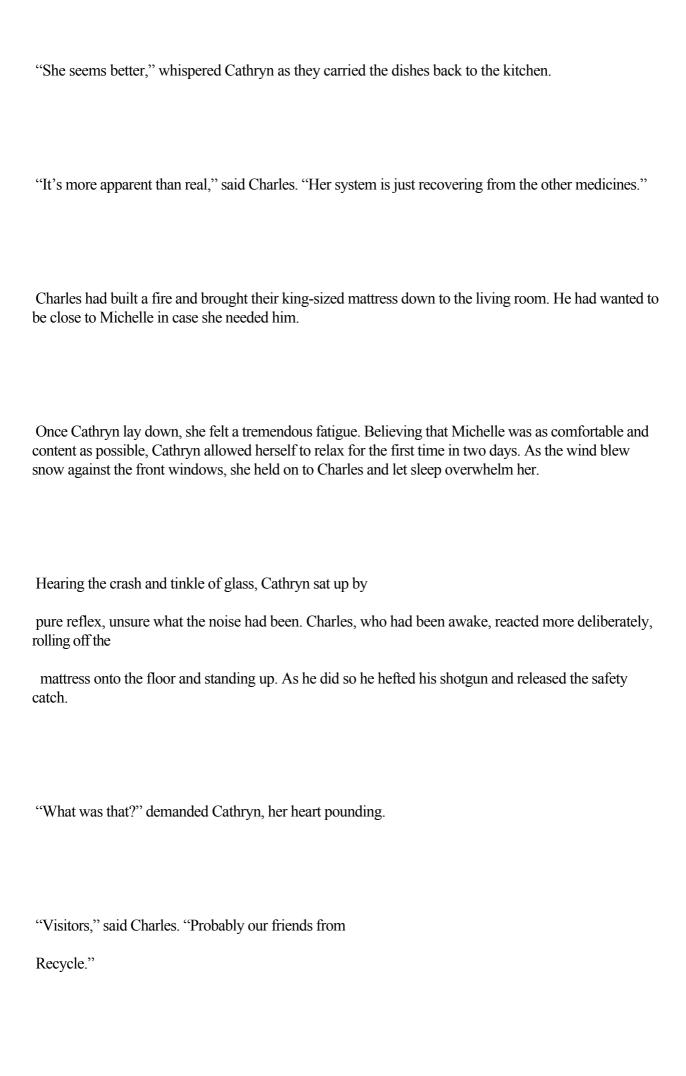
Earlier Cathryn had prepared some food while Charles worked in the makeshift lab. He'd taken a sample of his blood, separated the cells, and isolated some T-lymphocytes with the aid of sheep erythrocytes. Then he'd incubated the

T-lymphocytes with some of his microphages and Michelle's leukemic cells. While they had dinner he told Cathryn that there still was no sign of a delayed, cell-mediated hypersensitivity. He told her that in twenty-four hours, he'd have to give himself another challenge dose of Michelle's antigen.

Michelle had awakened from her morphine-induced sleep and

was overjoyed to see Cathryn. She'd not remembered seeing her stepmother arrive. Feeling somewhat better, she had even

eaten some solid food.

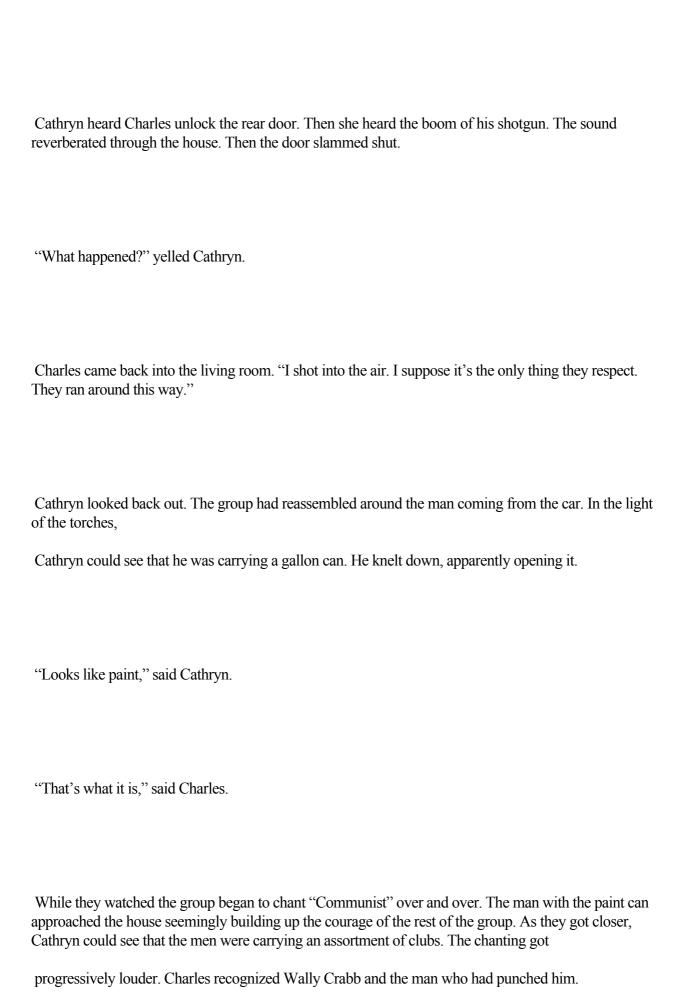




"I don't know," said Charles, "I really don't know."
"I'm going to call the police," said Cathryn.
"Don't bother," said Charles. "I'm sure they know about this."
"I'm still going to try," returned Cathryn.
She left him by the window and made her way back to the kitchen where she dialed the operator and asked to be connected to the Shaftesbury police. The phone rang eight
times before a tired voice answered. He identified himself as
Bernie Crawford.
Cathryn reported that their house was being attacked by a group of drunks and that they needed immediate assistance.
"Just a minute," said Bernie.

Cathryn could hear a drawer open and Bernie fumbled around for something.
"Just a minute. I gotta find a pencil," said Bernie,
leaving the line again before Cathryn could talk. Outside she heard a yell, and Charles came scurrying into the kitchen, going up to the window on the north side facing the pond.
"Okay," said Bernie coming back on the line. "What's the address?"
Cathryn quickly gave the address.
"Zip code?" asked Bernie.
"Zip code?" questioned Cathryn. "We need help right now."
"Lady, paperwork is paperwork. I gotta fill out a form before I dispatch a car."
Cathryn gave a zip code.





The group stopped about fifty feet from the house. The man with the paint kept walking as the others egged him on. Charles pulled away from the window, making her stand behind him. He had a clear view of the door, and he slipped his finger around the trigger.
They heard the footsteps stop and then the sound of a paintbrush against the shingles. After five minutes there was a final sound of paint splashing up against the front door, followed by the clatter of the can hitting the front porch.
Rushing back to the window, Charles could see that the men were yelling and whooping with laughter. Slowly they walked back down the drive pushing and shoving each other into the snow. At the base of the driveway and after several vociferous arguments, the men climbed into the two cars. With horns blaring they drove off into the night, heading north on Interstate 301 toward Shaftesbury.
As abruptly as it had been broken, the wintry silence returned. Charles let out a long breath. He put down the shotgun and took Cathryn's hands in his. "Now that you've seen how unpleasant it is, perhaps it would be better for you to go back to your mother's until this is over."
"No way," said Cathryn, shaking her head. Then she broke away to tend to Michelle.
Fifteen minutes later the Shaftesbury police cruiser



T-lymphocytes for signs of delayed hypersensitivity to
Michelle's leukemic cells, Cathryn tried to make their
topsy-turvy house more livable. Between Charles's equipment and reagents, Michelle's bed, and the king-sized mattress, the living room was like a maze. There was little Cathryn could do there, but the kitchen soon responded to her efforts.
"No sign of any appropriate reaction with my lymphocytes," said Charles, coming in for some more coffee. "You're going to have to give me another dose of Michelle's antigen later today."
"Sure," said Cathryn, trying to buoy both her own and Charles's confidence. She wasn't sure she could do it again. The thought alone gave her gooseflesh.
"I must think of some way to make us more secure here," said Charles. "I don't know what I would have done if those men last night had been drunk enough to storm the back door."
"Vandals are one thing," said Cathryn. "What if the police come, wanting to arrest you?"
Charles turned back to Cathryn.
"Until I finish with what I'm doing, I have to keep everybody out of the house."

"I think it's just a matter of time before the police
come," said Cathryn. "And I'm afraid it will be a lot more difficult to keep them out. Just by resisting, you'll be breaking the law, and they might feel obligated to use force."
"I don't think so," said Charles. "There's too much for them to lose and very little to gain."
"The stimulus could be Michelle, thinking they need to recommence her treatment."
Charles nodded slowly. "You might be right, but even if you are, there's nothing else to be done."
"I think there is," said Cathryn. "Maybe I can stop the police from looking for you. I met the detective who's handling the case. Perhaps I should go see him and tell him that I don't want to press charges. If there are no charges, then they would stop looking for you."
Charles took a large gulp of coffee. What Cathryn said  made sense. He knew that if the police came in force, they could get him out of the house. That was one of the reasons he'd boarded up the windows so carefully; afraid of tear gas or the like. But he thought they probably would have other means which he hadn't wanted to consider. Cathryn was right; the polic would be real trouble.
"All right," said Charles, "but you'll have to use the
rental van in the garage. I don't think the station wagon has any windshield."

Putting on their coats, they walked hand in hand through the inch of new snow to the locked barn. They both saw the

charred remains of the playhouse at the pond's edge and both avoided mentioning it. The still-smoldering ashes were too sharp a reminder of the terror of the previous night.

As Cathryn backed the van out of the garage, she felt a reluctance to leave. With Michelle ostensibly feeling better and despite the vandals, Cathryn had enjoyed her newly found closeness with Charles. With some difficulty, since driving a large van was a new experience, Cathryn got the vehicle

turned around. She waved good-bye to Charles and drove slowly

down their slippery driveway.

Reaching the foot of the hill, she turned to look back at

the house. In the steely light, it looked abandoned among the leafless trees. Across the front of the house, the word

"Communist" was painted in careless, large block letters. The rest of the red paint had been splashed on the front door,

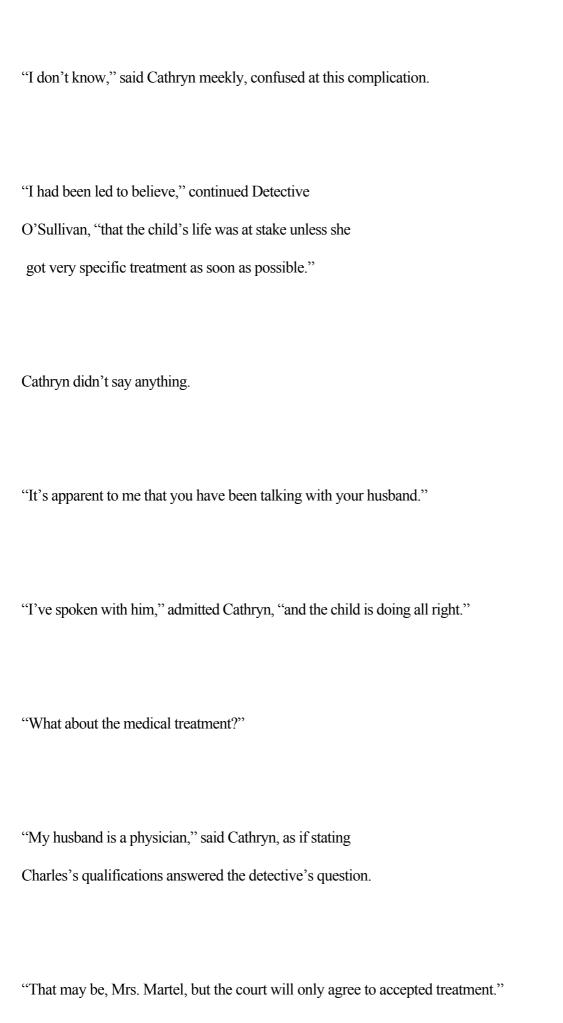
and the way it had splattered and ran off the porch made it look like blood.

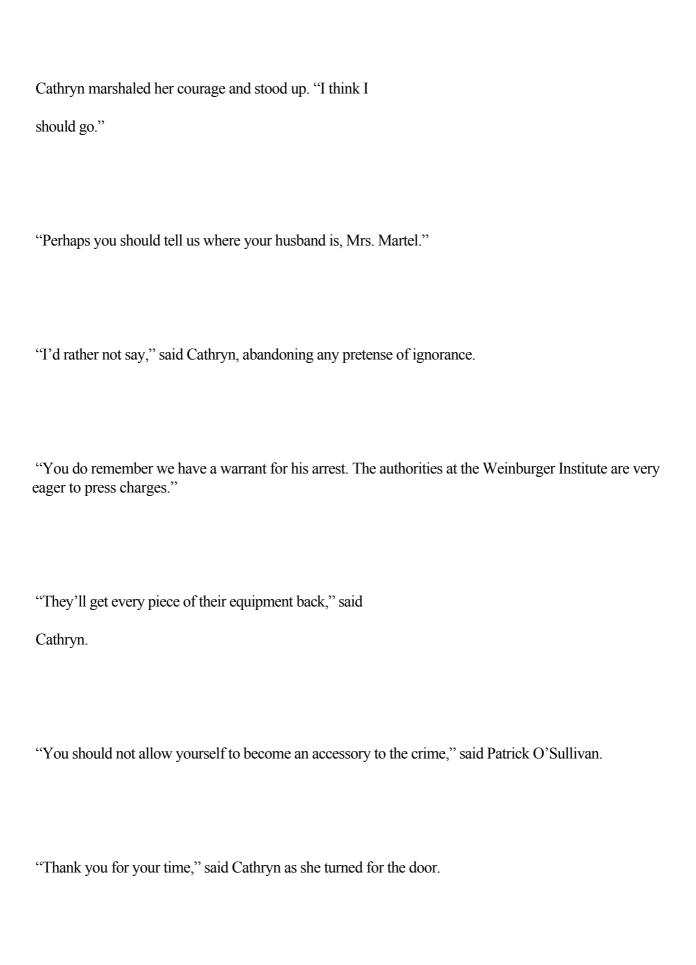
Driving directly to the Boston Police Headquarters on Berkeley Street, Cathryn rehearsed what she was going to say to Patrick O'Sullivan. Deciding that brevity was the best approach, she was confident that she'd be in and out in a matter of minutes.

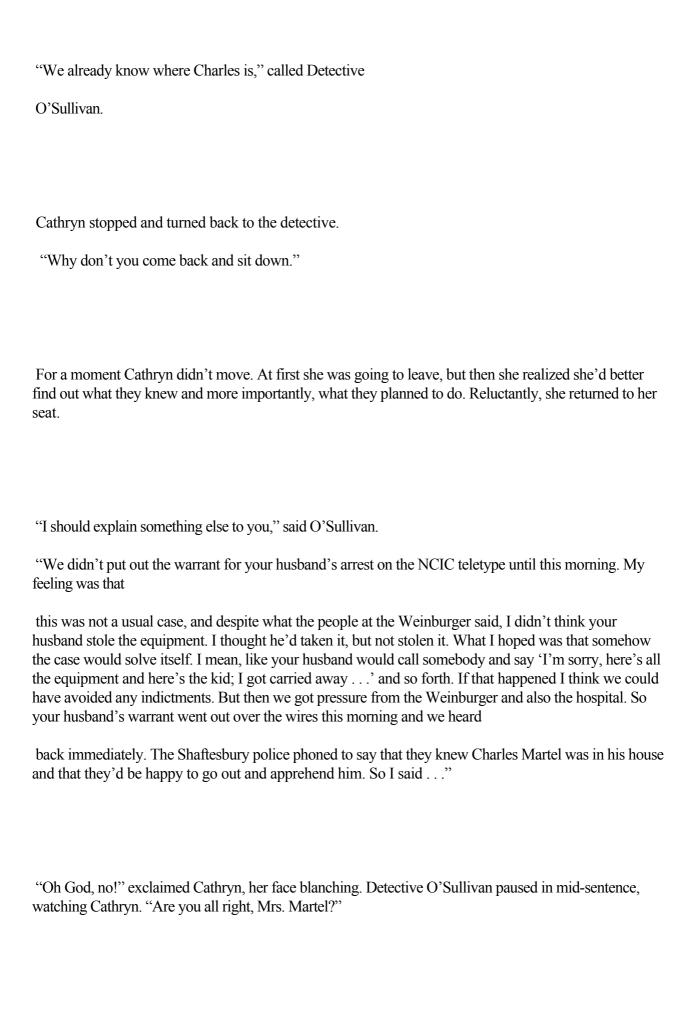
She had a great deal of trouble finding a parking spot and ended up leaving the van in an illegal yellow zone. Taking the elevator to the sixth floor, she found O'Sullivan's office without difficulty. The detective

got up as she entered and came around his desk. He was dressed in exactly
the same outfit as he'd had on twenty-four hours earlier when she'd met him. Even the shirt was the same because she remembered a coffee stain just to the right of his dark blue polyester tie. It was hard for Cathryn to imagine that this seemingly gentle man could muster the violence he obviously needed on occasion for his job.
"Would you like to sit down?" asked Patrick. "Can I take your coat?"
"That's okay, thank you," said Cathryn. "I'll only take a moment of your time."
The detective's office looked like the set for a TV melodrama. There were the obligatory stern photos of some of the police hierarchy on the chipped and peeling walls. There was also a cork bulletin board filled with an assortment of wanted posters and photographs. The detective's desk was awash with papers, envelopes, soup cans full of pencils, an old typewriter, and a picture of a chubby redheaded woman with five redheaded little girls.
O'Sullivan tipped back in his chair, his fingers linked
over his stomach. His expression was entirely blank. Cathryn realized she had no idea what the man was thinking.
"Well," she said uneasily, her confidence waning. "The reason I came is to tell you that I'm not interested in pressing charges against my husband."
Detective O'Sullivan's face did not alter in the slightest detail.

Cathryn looked away for a moment. Already the meeting was not going according to plan. She continued: "In other words, I don't want guardianship of the child."
The detective remained unresponsive, augmenting Cathryn's anxiety.
"It's not that I don't care," added Cathryn quickly. "It's just that my husband is the biological parent, and he is an M.D., so I think he's in the best position to determine the kind of treatment the child should receive."
"Where is your husband?" asked O'Sullivan.
Cathryn blinked. The detective's question made it sound as if he hadn't been listening to her at all. Then she realized she shouldn't have paused. "I don't know," said Cathryn, feeling she sounded less than convincing.
Abruptly O'Sullivan tipped forward in his chair, bringing his arms down on the top of his desk. "Mrs. Martel, I think
I'd better inform you of something. Even though you initiated the legal proceedings, you cannot unilaterally stop them before the hearing. The judge who granted you emergency temporary guardianship also appointed a guardian ad litim by the name of Robert Taber. How does Mr. Taber feel about pressing charges against your husband in order to get
Michelle Martel back into the hospital?"

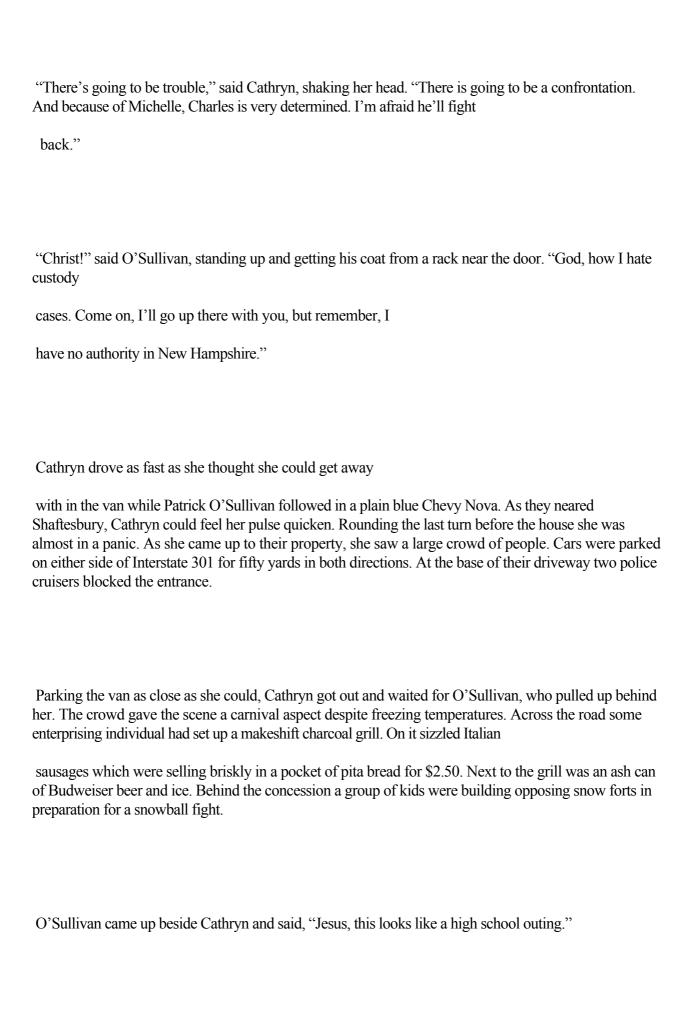






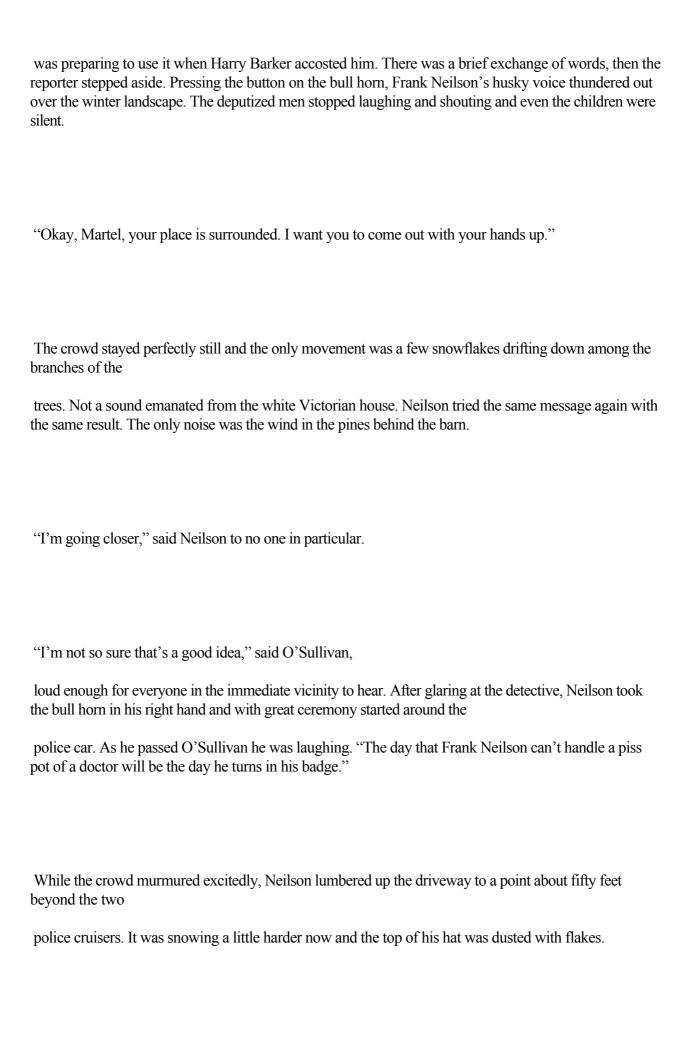
Cathryn closed her eyes and placed her hands over her
face. After a minute she took her hands down and looked at
O'Sullivan. "What a nightmare, and it continues."
"What are you talking about?" asked the detective.
Cathryn described Charles's crusade against Recycle, Ltd. and the attitude of the local police, also the
police's reaction to the attack on their house.
"They did seem a bit eager," admitted O'Sullivan, remembering his conversation with Frank Neilson.
"Can you call them back and tell them to wait?" asked
Cathryn.
"It's been too long for that," said O'Sullivan.
"Could you just call and make contact so that the local police don't feel they are operating by themselves," pleaded Cathryn.
O'Sullivan picked up his phone and asked the switchboard operator to put him through to Shaftesbury.





"All except for the guns," said Cathryn.
Grouped behind the two police cruisers was a throng of men dressed in all manner of clothing, from army fatigues to ski parkas, and each armed with a hunting rifle. Some carried their guns in one hand, Budweiser in the other. In the center of the group was Frank Neilson, with his foot on the bumper of one of the police cars, pressing a small walkie-talkie to his ear and apparently coordinating unseen, armed men as they completed surrounding the house.
O'Sullivan left Cathryn and walked up to Frank Neilson, introducing himself. From where Cathryn was standing, she could tell that the Shaftesbury police chief viewed the detective as an intruder. As if it were an effort, Neilson withdrew his foot from the car bumper and
assumed his full height, towering a foot over O'Sullivan. The two men did not look as if they shared the same profession. Neilson was wearing his usual blue police uniform, complete with massive leather-holstered service revolver. On his head he had a Russian-style fake fur hat with all the flaps tied on top. O'Sullivan, on the other hand, had on a weather-beaten,
wool-lined khaki coat. He wore no hat and his hair was disheveled.
"How's it going?" asked O'Sullivan casually.
"Fine," said Neilson. "Everything under control." He wiped his snub nose with the back of his hand.
The walkie-talkie crackled and Neilson excused himself. He spoke into the machine saying that the tomcat group should approach to one hundred yards and hold. Then he turned back to O'Sullivan. "Gotta make sure the suspect doesn't sneak out the back door."

O'Sullivan turned away from Neilson and eyed the armed
men. "Do you think it's advisable to have this much firepower on hand?"
"I suppose you want to tell me how to handle this situation?" asked Neilson sarcastically. "Listen, detective, this is New Hampshire, not Boston. You've got no authority here. And to tell you the honest truth, I don't appreciate you big city boys feeling you gotta come out here and give advice. I'm in charge here. I know how to handle a hostage situation. First secure the area, then negotiate. So if you'll excuse me, I got work to do."
Neilson turned his back on O'Sullivan and redirected his attention to the walkie-talkie.
"Pardon me?" said a tall, gaunt man tapping O'Sullivan on the shoulder. "Name's Harry Barker, Boston Globe. You're Detective O'Sullivan from the Boston police, right?"
"You guys don't waste any time, do you?" said O'Sullivan.  "The Shaftesbury Sentinel was good enough to give us a jingle. This could be a great story. Lots of human interest. Can you give me some background?"
O'Sullivan pointed out Frank Neilson. "There is the man in charge. Let him give you the story."
As O'Sullivan watched, Neilson picked up a bull horn and





Someone asked if he'd been hit with any bird shot, but the chief shook his head. Meticulously he shook off the snow, and adjusted his uniform and holster. "I was much too fast for him."
A local TV news van pulled up and a camera crew alighted, quickly finding their way over to the police chief. The commentator was a bright young woman, dressed in a mink hat and a long, down-filled coat. After a brief word with Neilson, the camera lights went on, flooding the immediate area. The young woman made a rapid introduction, then turned to the police chief and stuck the microphone about an inch from his pug nose.
Frank Neilson's personality underwent a 180-degree change.  Acting shy and embarrassed, he said, "I'm just doing my job the best way I know how."
With the arrival of the TV camera, the politically minded town manager, John Randolph, materialized out of the crowd. He squeezed his way into the sphere of lights and put an arm around Neilson. "And we think he's doing a splendid job. Let's hear it for our police chief." John Randolph took his arm off the police chief and began clapping. The crowd followed suit.
The reporter pulled the microphone back and asked if Frank could give the audience an idea of what was happening.
"Well," began Frank, leaning into the mike, "we got a crazy scientist holed up here." He pointed awkwardly over his shoulder at the house. "He's got a sick kid he's keeping from the doctors. The man's heavily armed and dangerous, and there's a warrant for his arrest for child-snatching and

grand larceny. But there's no need to panic because everything is under control."
O'Sullivan wormed his way back out of the crowd, searching for Cathryn. He found her near her car, her hands pressed against her mouth. The spectacle terrified her.
"The outcome of all this is going to be tragic unless you intervene," said Cathryn.
"I can't intervene," explained O'Sullivan. "I told you that before I came up here. But I think everything will be all right as long as the press and the media are here. They'll keep the chief from doing anything crazy."
"I want to get up to the house and be with Charles," said  Cathryn. "I'm afraid he might believe I brought the police."
"Are you crazy?" asked O'Sullivan. "There must be forty men with guns surrounding this place. It's dangerous.
Besides, they're not going to let you go up there. It just means one more hostage. Try to be a little patient. I'll talk to Frank Neilson again and try to convince him to call in the state police."
The detective started back toward the police cruisers,
wishing he'd stayed in Boston where he belonged. As he neared the makeshift command post, he again heard the police chief's voice magnified by the bull horn. It was snowing harder now and one of the deputies was asking whether the chief could be heard up at the house. One way or the other, Charles did not answer.

O'Sullivan went up to Neils Charles. The	on and suggested that it m	night be easier to use the po	ortable phone and call
chief pondered the suggestionumber, and	on and although he didn't	respond, he climbed into h	is cruiser, got Charles's
dialed. Charles answered in	mediately.		
"Okay, Martel. What are yo	our conditions for letting th	e kid go?"	
Charles's reply was short: "	You can go to hell, Neilso	n." The line went dead.	
"Wonderful suggestion," sa	d Neilson to O'Sullivan as	she	
put the phone back into the when there's no demands? I			ruck can you negotiate
"Chief," called a voice. "Ho	w about letting me and my	y buddies storm the place.'	,
The suggestion horrified O'	Sullivan. He tried to think	of a way to get the chief to	call in the state police.
In front of Neilson stood thr	ree men dressed in white, l	nooded militarylike parkas	and white pants.



The faster Cathryn tried to run, the more trouble she had

as her feet broke through the crusted snow. Upon reaching the driveway, the snowdrift left from the plowing acted like a barrier, and Cathryn was reduced to scrambling over it on all fours. Sliding down the opposite side, she got to her feet.

With a whoop of excitement, a half dozen of the idle deputies responded and struggled around the squad cars. It

was a competition to see who got to the prize first. But the new-fallen snow made the going treacherous and the deputies inadvertently inhibited each other. Eventually two of them made it around the cars and began running up the drive as fast as they could. A murmur of excitement escaped from the

crowd. O'Sullivan, on the other hand, found himself clenching his fists and urging Cathryn to greater efforts even though he knew her presence in the house would only complicate the situation.

Cathryn found herself gasping for breath. She could hear the heavy breathing of her pursuers and knew they were gaining on her. Desperately, she tried to think of some

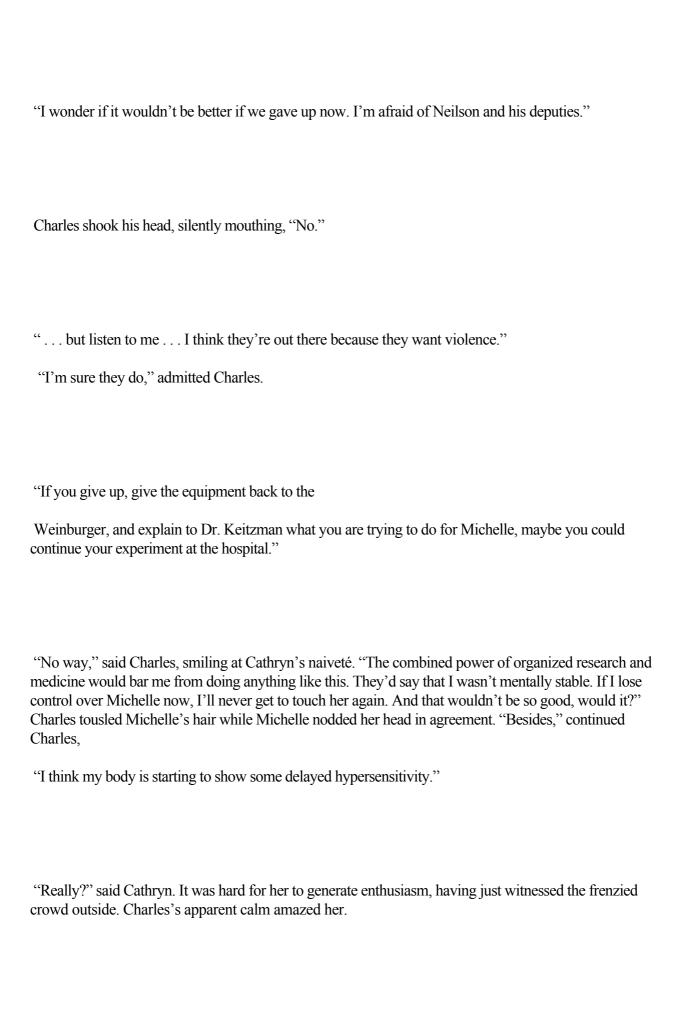
evasive maneuver but a growing pain in her side made thinking difficult.

Ahead she saw the red-spattered door swing open. Then

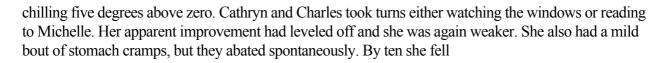
there was a flash of orange light and an almost simultaneous explosion. Cathryn stopped, gasping for breath, waiting to feel something. Looking back, she could see that her pursuers had dropped into the snow for cover. She tried to run but couldn't. Reaching the front steps she had to pull herself up with her arms. Charles, holding the shotgun in his right

hand, reached out to her and she felt him yank her forward and into the house.

Cathryn collapsed on the floor, her chest heaving. She
could hear Michelle calling but she didn't move. Charles was running from window to window. After a minute, Cathryn pulled herself to her feet and walked over to Michelle.
"I missed you, Mommy," said Michelle, putting her arms around her.
Cathryn knew she'd done the right thing.
Charles came back into the living room and checked out the front again. Satisfied, he came over to Cathryn and Michelle, and putting gun down, enveloped them in his arms. "Now I have both my women," he said with a twinkle.
Cathryn immediately launched into an explanation of what happened, saying over and over that she had had nothing to do with the arrival of the police.
"I never thought for a second you did," said Charles. "I'm glad to have you back. It's hard watching in two directions at once."
"I don't trust the local police," said Cathryn. "I think that Neilson is a psychopath."
"I couldn't agree more," said Charles.



"The last time I tested my T-lymphocytes there was some mild reaction to Michelle's leukemic cells. It's happening, but it's slow. Even so, I think I should take another challenge dose of the antigen when things quiet down." Outside Cathryn could hear the bull horn but it was muffled by the falling snow. She wished she could stop time. For the moment she felt secure, even as she sensed the evil outside. Because of the snow, night came early. Charles chose dinner-time to have Cathryn help him take another injection of Michelle's antigen. He used a different technique, encouraging Cathryn to slip a catheter into one of his veins. It took Cathryn several tries but to her surprise she did it. With an intravenous line open, Charles gave her explicit instructions how to handle the expected anaphylactic reaction. He took epinephrine almost immediately after the antigen and the rather severe reaction was easily controlled. Cathryn made dinner while Charles devised methods to secure the house. He boarded up the second-story windows and increased the barricades behind the doors. What worried him most was tear gas, and he put out the fire and stuffed the chimney to prevent someone from dropping in a canister. As evening turned into night, Cathryn and Charles could see the crowd begin to disperse, disappointed and angry that there hadn't been any violence. A few persistent gawkers remained, but they, too, drifted off by nine-thirty as the thermometer dipped to a



asleep.

Except for the occasional sound of the oil burner kicking on, the house was silent, and Charles, who was taking the first watch, began to have difficulty staying awake. The wired feeling he'd gotten from the dose of epinephrine had long since worn off to be replaced by a powerful exhaustion. He poured himself a cup of lukewarm coffee and carried it back into the living room. He had to move by feel because he'd turned out all the indoor lights. Sitting down next to one of the front windows, he looked between the planks and tried to visualize the police cars, but it wasn't possible. He let his head rest for a moment and in that moment fell into a deep, encompassing sleep.

## **FIFTEEN**

At exactly 2 A.M. Bernie Crawford gingerly put his arm over the front seat of the police cruiser and prepared to

wake the snoring chief as he had been asked. The problem was that Frank hated being pulled from sleep. The last time Bernie had tried to wake the chief on a stakeout, the chief had punched him ferociously on the side of the head. When he'd finally become fully conscious, he'd apologized, but that didn't erase the pain. Pulling his arm back, Bernie decided on a different ploy. He got out of the car, noticing that the new snow had accumulated to three inches. Then he

opened the rear door, reached in, and gave the chief a shove.

Neilson's head popped up and he tried to grab Bernie, who

quickly backed up. In spite of his bulk, the chief bounded out of the car, obviously intent on catching his deputy, who was prepared to flee down Interstate 301. But as soon as Neilson hit the five-degree air, he stopped, looking disoriented.

"You all right, chief?" called Bernie from fifty feet away.

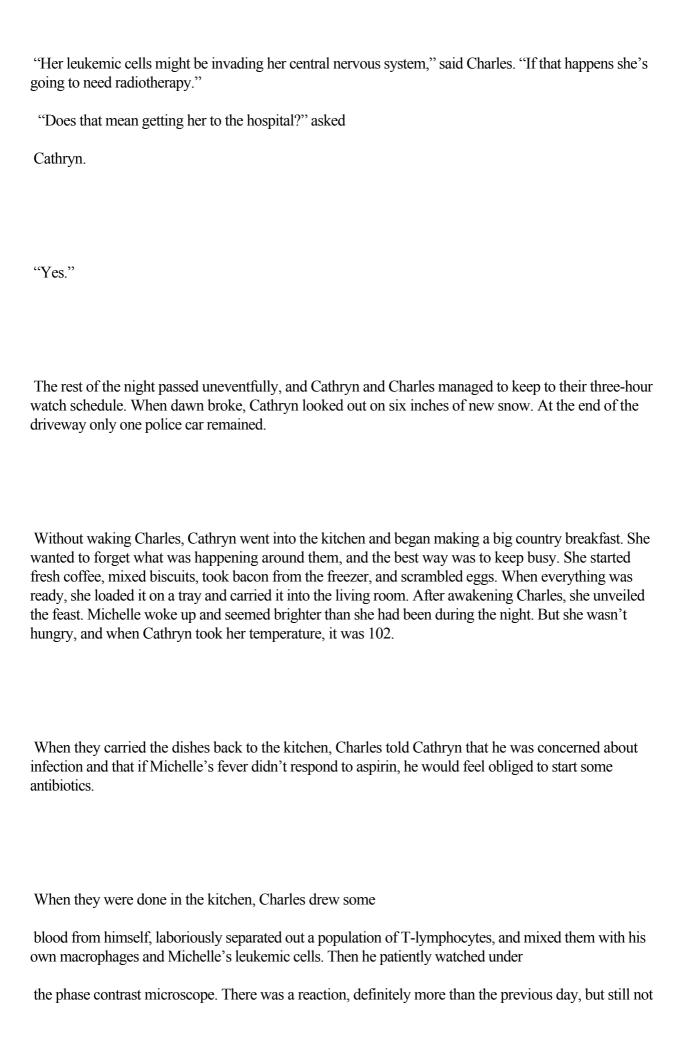
"Of course I'm all right," grumbled Frank. "What the hell time is it?"	
Back in the front seat of the cruiser, Neilson coughed for almost three minutes, making it is light up his cigarette. After he'd finally taken several puffs, he took out his walkie-talkie an Wally Crabb. Neilson wasn't entirely happy with his plan, but as the deputies said, he didrubetter idea. Midway through the evening, everyone had run out of patience and Neilson has to do something or lose respect. It was at that time he had agreed to Wally Crabb's idea.	nd contacted n't have a
Wally had been a marine and had spent a good deal of time in Vietnam. He told Frank Neilson that as long as you went in fast, the people inside a hor chance to resist. Simple as that. Then he pointed out that after it was over, Neilson could put the suspect to Boston and the kid to the hospital. He'd be a hero.	
"What about the guy's shotgun?" Frank had asked.	
"You think he's going to be sitting there with the thing in his hot little hand? Naw. After we back door away, we'll just sail in there and grab him. They'll be so surprised they won't move a muscle. Believe me, you'd think I'd do it if I didn't know it would be stupid, but I'm not crazy."	
So Neilson had relented. He liked the idea of being a hero. They decided on 2 A.M. as the chose Wally	ne time and
Crabb, Giorgio Brezowski, and Angelo DeJesus to hit the door. Neilson didn't know the Wally Crabb said they'd	guys, but

been in Nam with him and were "real" experienced. Besides, they'd volunteered.
The walkie-talkie crackled in Frank's hand, and Wally's
voice filled the cab. "We read you. We're all set. As soon as we open the front door, come on up."
"You sure this will work?" asked Neilson.
"Relax, will you? Jesus Christ!"
"All right, we're standing by."
Neilson switched off the walkie-talkie and tossed it in the back seat. There was nothing more he could do until he saw the front door open.
Wally slipped the tiny walkie-talkie into his parka and zipped it up. His large frame shivered with anticipatory excitement. Violence for Wally was as good as sex, maybe even better because it was less complicated.
"You guys ready?" he asked the two forms huddled behind him. They nodded. The group had approached the Martel house from the south, moving through the pine trees until they came upon the barn. Dressed in white, courtesy of the management of Recycle, Ltd., they were almost invisible in the light but persistent snow.

Reaching the barn, they'd made their way around the
eastern end until Wally, who was in the lead, had been able to look around the corner at the house. Except for a light on the back porch, the house was dark. From that point it was about a hundred feet to the back door.
"Okay, check the equipment," said Wally. "Where's the shotgun?"
Angelo passed the gun to Brezo who passed it to Wally; the gun was a two-barrel, twelve-gauge Remington, loaded with triple zero magnum shells capable of blasting a hole through a car door. Wally flipped off the safety. Each man also had been issued a police thirty-eight.
"Everybody remember their job?" asked Wally. The plan was for Wally to lead, blast open the rear door, then pull the
door open for Brezo and Angelo to rush inside. Wally thought it was a good plan, the kind that had kept him alive through five years of Vietnam. He'd made it a habit only to volunteer for the safe part of any assault.
Angelo and Brezo nodded, tense with excitement. They'd made a bet with each other. The one who got Martel first would be a hundred bucks richer.
"Okay," said Wally. "I'm off. I'll signal for Angelo." After checking the dark house once more, Wally scrambled around the edge of the barn, running low to the ground. He crossed the hundred feet quickly and noiselessly, pulling

Wally glanced at the two men. "Remember he has to be shot from the front, not the back."  With a burst of energy, Wally thundered up the back steps and aimed the shotgun at the lock of the back door. A blast sundered the peaceful night, blowing away a section of the back door. Wally grabbed the edge and yanked it open. At the same moment Brezo ran up the steps and past Wally, heading into the kitchen. Angelo was right behind him.  But when Wally opened the door it triggered Charles's trap. A cord pulled a pin from a simple mechanism which  supported several hundred-pound bags of Idaho potatoes which had been in the root cellar. The potatoes were hung by a stout rope from a hook directly above the door, and when the pin was pulled the potatoes began a rapid, swinging plunge.  Brezo had just snapped on his flashlight when he saw the swinging sacks. He raised his hands to protect his face at  the moment Angelo collided into the back of him. The potatoes hit Brezo square on. The impact made him accidentally pull  the trigger of his pistol as he was knocked straight back off the porch into the snow. The bullet picreed Angelo's calf before burying itself in the floor of the porch. He, too, was knocked off the porch, but sideways, taking with him part of the balustrade with the gingerbread trim. Wally, not sure of  what was happening, vaulted back over the railing and scrambled off toward the barn. Angelo was not aware he'd been shot until he tried to get up and his left foot refused to function. Brezo, having recovered enough to get to his feet, went to Angelo's aid.		elow the lip of the back porch. The house oined him holding their flashlights and piston	±
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Charles and Cathryn had bolted upright at the blast. When Charles recovered enough to orient himself, he reached frantically for the shotgun. When he found it, he ran into the kitchen. Cathryn rushed over to Michelle, but the child had not awakened.
Arriving in the kitchen, Charles could just make out the two sacks of potatoes still swinging in and out of the open back door. It was difficult to see beyond the sphere of light from the overhead back porch fixture, but he thought he made out two white figures heading for the barn. Switching off the light, Charles could see the men better. One seemed to be supporting the other as they frantically moved behind the barn.
Pulling the splintered door closed, Charles used some rope to secure it. Then he stuffed the hole made by the shotgun blast with a cushion from one of the kitchen chairs. With a good deal of effort he restrung the potatoes. He knew that it had been a close call. In the distance he could hear the
sound of an ambulance approaching, and he wondered if the man who'd been hit with the potatoes was seriously hurt.
Returning to the living room, he explained to Cathryn what had happened. Then he reached over and felt Michelle's forehead. The fever was back with a vengeance. Gently at first, then more forcibly, he tried to wake her. She finally opened her eyes and smiled, but fell immediately back to sleep.
"That's not a good sign," said Charles.
"What is it?" questioned Cathryn.

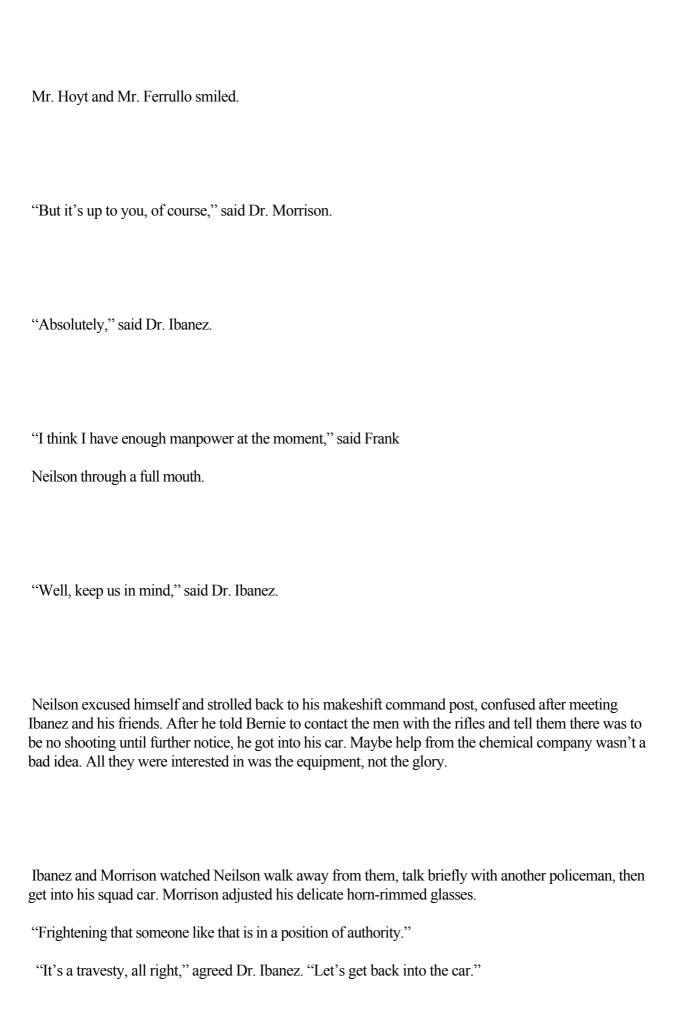




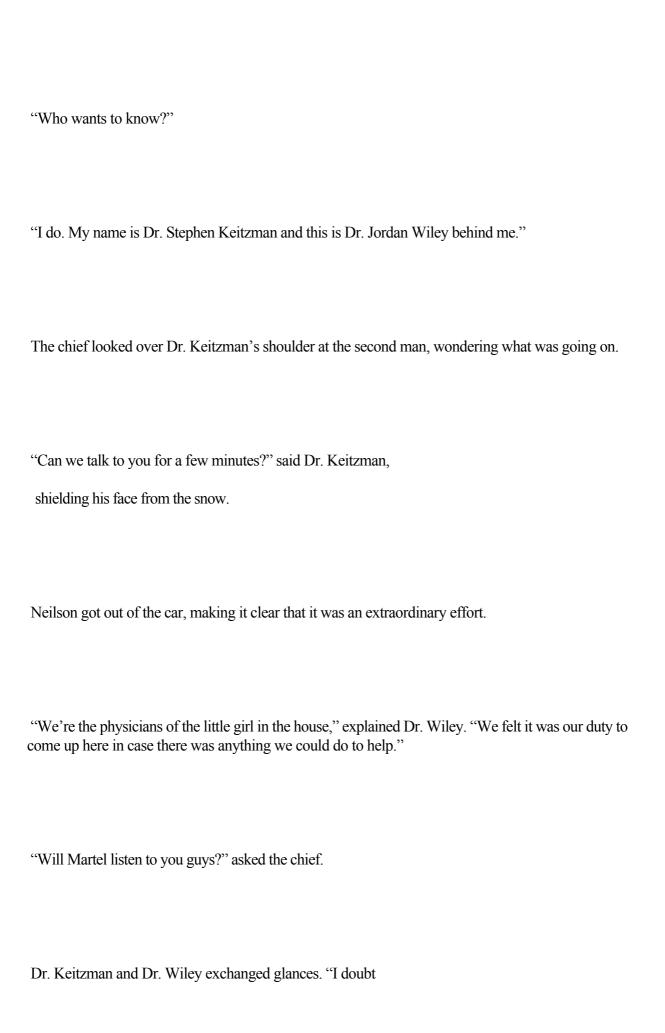


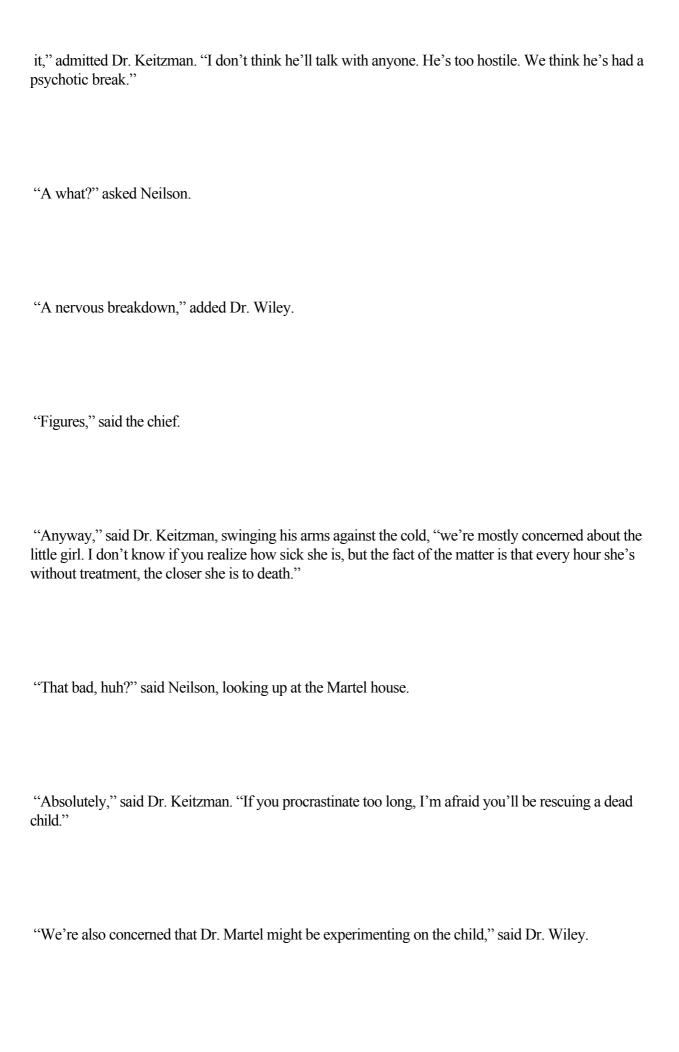
Angrily tossing the bull horn into the back seat of his cruiser, Neilson crossed the road for an Italian sausage in pita bread. As he was about to bite into the sandwich, he saw a long black limousine come around the bend and stop. Five
men got out. Two were dressed in fancy city clothes, one with white hair and a long fur coat, the other with almost no hair and a shiny leather coat cinched at the waist. The other two men were dressed in blue suits that appeared a size too
small. Neilson recognized the second two: they were bodyguards.
Frank took a bite from his sandwich as the men approached him.
"Neilson, my name is Dr. Carlos Ibanez. I'm honored to meet you."
Frank Neilson shook the doctor's hand.
"This is Dr. Morrison," said Ibanez, urging his colleague forward.
Neilson shook hands with Morrison, then took another bite of his sausage sandwich.
"Understand you got a problem here," said Ibanez, looking up at the Martel house.

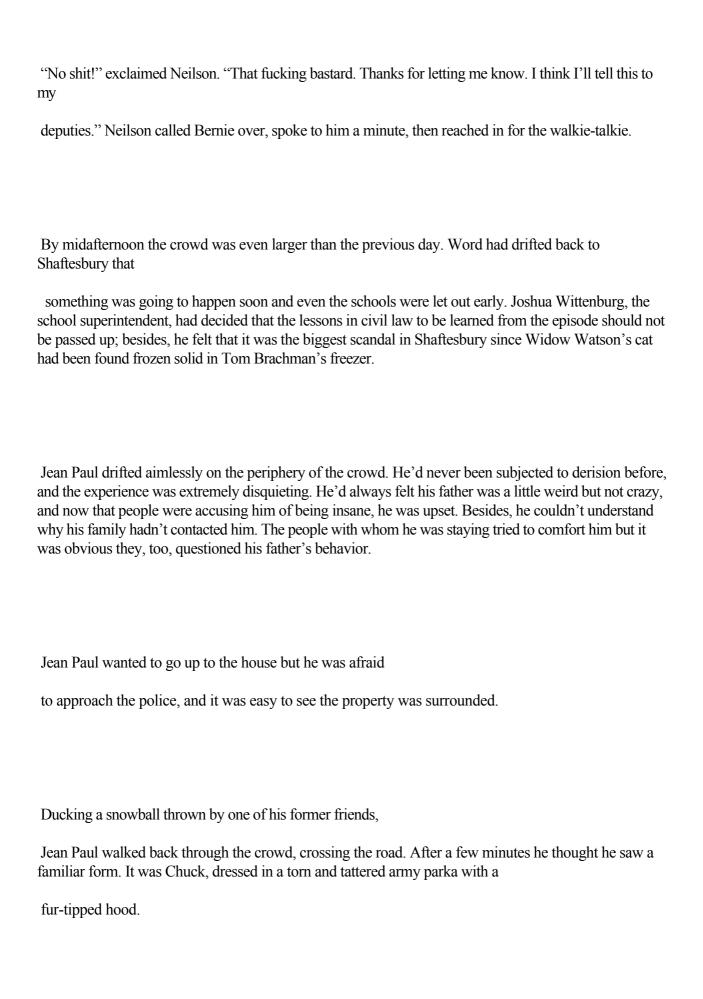
	Frank shrugged. It was never good to admit to problems.
	Turning back to the chief, Ibanez said, "We're the owners of all the expensive equipment your suspect has up there in his house. And we're very concerned about it."
j	Frank nodded.
	"We rode out here to offer our help," said Ibanez magnanimously.
	Frank looked from face to face. This was getting crazier by the minute.
·	"In fact, we brought two professional security men from Breur Chemicals with us. A Mr. Eliot Hoyt and Anthony Ferrullo."
	Frank found himself shaking hands with the two security men.
•	"Of course we know you have everything under control," said Dr. Morrison. "But we thought you might find these men helpful and they have brought some equipment you might find interesting."



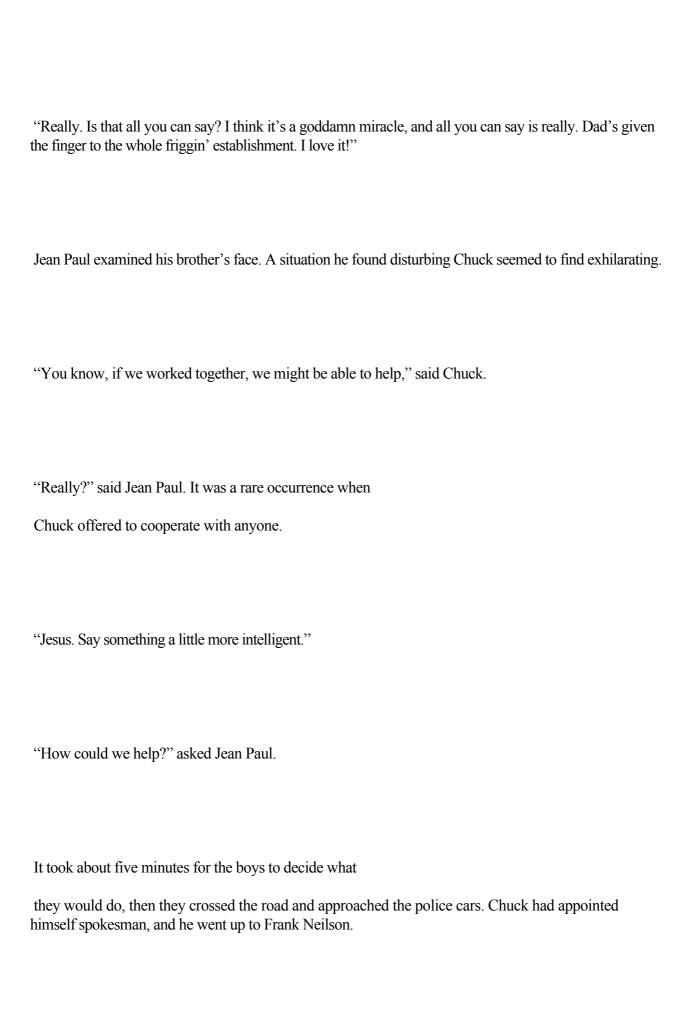








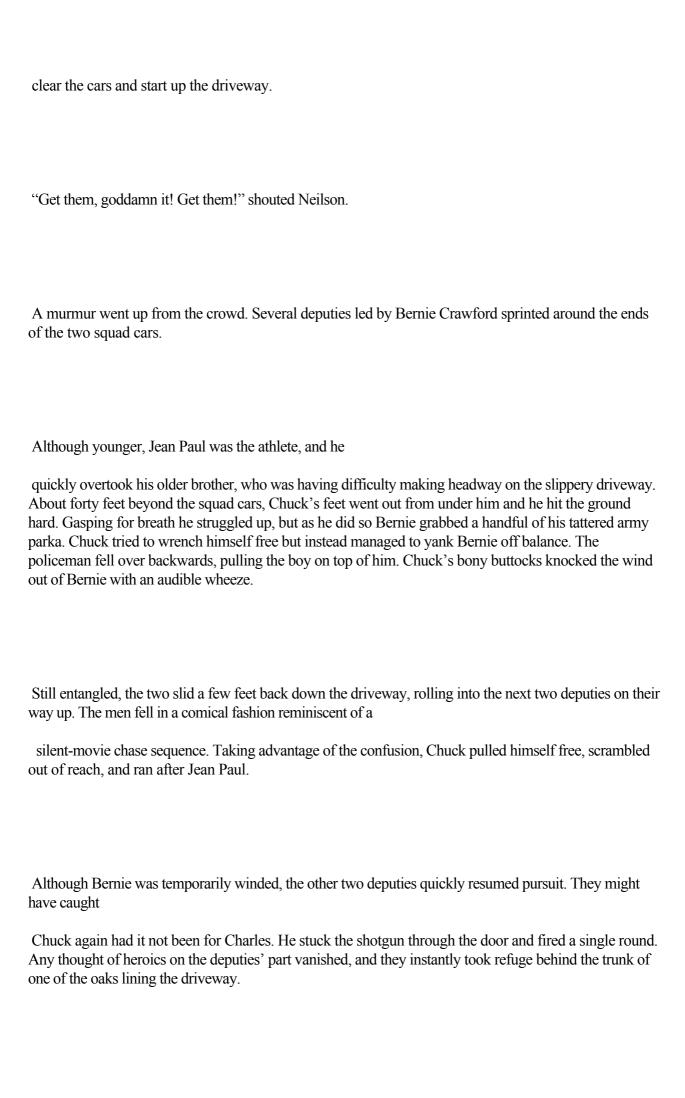




The chief was overjoyed to find the boys. He did not know how to proceed when the kids had presented themselves. Although he dismissed their request to go up to the house to reason with their father, he convinced them to use the bull horn, and spent a good thirty minutes coaching them on what they should say. He hoped that Charles would talk to his sons and communicate his conditions for resolving the situation. Frank was pleased that the boys were so cooperative. When everything was ready, Frank took the bull horn, greeted the spectators, then pointed it at the house. His voice boomed up the driveway calling for Charles to open the door and speak to his sons. Neilson lowered the bull horn and waited. There was no sound or movement from the house. The chief repeated his message, then waited again, with the same result. Cursing under his breath, he handed the instrument to Chuck and told the boy to try. Chuck took the bull horn with trembling hands. Pushing the button, he started speaking. "Dad, it's me, Chuck, and Jean Paul. Can you hear me?" After the third time, the paint-splattered door opened about six inches. "I hear you, Chuck," Charles called.

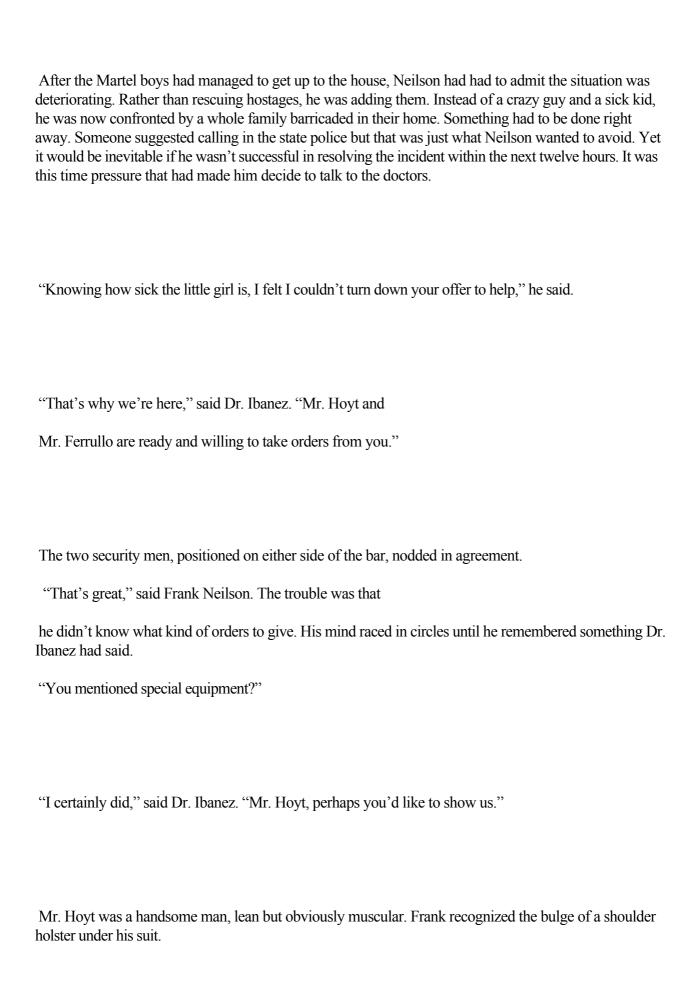
At that moment, Chuck clambered over the front bumpers of two squad cars, discarding the bull horn. Jean Paul followed

at his heels. Everyone, including the deputies, was intent on watching the house when the boys made their move, and for a moment they didn't respond. It gave the boys a chance to



As the boys reached the front porch, Charles opened the
door, and they dashed inside. Charles slammed the door behind them, secured it, then checked the windows to make sure no
one else was coming. Satisfied, he turned to his sons.
The two boys were standing self-consciously near the door, gasping for breath, and amazed at the transformation of their living room into a science-fiction laboratory. Chuck, an
old-movie buff, noticing the boarded-up windows, said it looked like the set of a Frankenstein movie. They both began to smile, but became serious when they saw Charles's dour expression.
"The one thing I thought I didn't have to worry about was you two," said Charles sternly. "Goddamn it!
What on earth are you doing here?"
"We thought you needed help," said Chuck lamely. "Everyone else is against you."
"I couldn't stand to hear what people were saying about you," said Jean Paul.
"This is our family," said Chuck. "We should be here, especially if we can help Michelle."
"How is she, Dad?" asked Jean Paul.

Charles didn't answer. His anger at the boys abruptly dissolved. Chuck's comment was not only surprising, it was correct. They were a family, and the boys should not be summarily excluded. Besides, as far as Charles knew, it was
the first unselfish thing Chuck had ever done.
"You little bastards!" Charles suddenly grinned.
Caught off guard by their father's abrupt change of mood, the boys hesitated for a moment, then rushed to give him a hug.
Charles realized he couldn't remember the last time he'd held his sons. Cathryn, who'd been watching since the boys first appeared, came up and kissed them both.
Then they all went over to Michelle, and Charles gently
woke her. She gave them a broad grin and Chuck bent over and put his arms around her.
SIXTEEN
Neilson had never been in a limousine before, and he wasn't sure he was going to like it. But once he'd ducked
through the door and settled back in the plush seat, he felt right at home: it had a bar. He refused a mixed drink on account of being on duty but accepted straight brandy for its medicinal powers against the cold.





Tony Ferrullo, who's an expert at this sort of thing, to toss a concussion grenade into the living
room where the suspect is obviously staying. At that point, it would be easy to rush both the front and back doors and rescue the hostages."
"When could we try it?" asked Frank Neilson.
"You're the boss," said Mr. Hoyt.
"Tonight?" asked Frank Neilson.
"Tonight it is," said Mr. Hoyt.
Neilson left the limousine in a state of suppressed excitement. Dr. Morrison reached out and pulled the door closed.
Hoyt laughed: "It's like taking candy from a child."
"Will you be able to make it look like self-defense?" asked Dr. Ibanez.

Ferrullo straightened up. "I can make it look any way you want."
At 10 P.M. exactly, Charles reached over and switched off the dialyzer. Then, as carefully as if he were handling the most precious commodity on earth, he reached into the machine and withdrew the dialyzate in a small vial. His fingers trembled as he transferred the crystal clear solution to the sterilizer. He had no idea of the structure of the small molecule contained in the vial except that it was dialyzable, which had been the final step in its isolation, and that it was not affected by the enzymes that broke down DNA, RNA, and peptide linkages in proteins. But the fact that the structure of the molecule was unknown was less important at this stage than knowledge of its effect. This was the mysterious transfer factor which would hopefully transfer his delayed hypersensitivity to Michelle.
That afternoon, Charles had again tested his T-lymphocyte response with Michelle's leukemic cells. The reaction had been dramatic, with the T-lymphocytes instantly lysing and destroying the leukemic cells. As Charles had watched under the phase contrast microscope, he couldn't believe the rapidity of the response. Apparently the T-lymphocytes, sensitized to a surface antigen on the leukemic cell, were able to pierce the leukemic cells' membranes. Charles had shouted with joy the moment he saw the reaction.
Having found his delayed hypersensitivity response adequate, he had canceled the next dose of antigen he'd planned to give himself. This had pleased Cathryn, who had been finding the procedure increasingly distasteful. Instead he had announced that he wanted to draw off two pints of his blood. Cathryn had turned green, but Chuck had been able to overcome his distaste for blood and, along with Jean Paul, was able to help Charles with the task.

Before dinner, Charles had slowly separated out the white blood cells in one of the sophisticated machines he had taken from the Weinburger. In the early evening he had begun the arduous task of extracting from the white blood cells the small molecule that he was now sterilizing.

At that point, he knew he was flying blind. What he'd accomplished would have taken years under proper research conditions where each step would have been examined critically and reproduced hundreds of times. Yet what he'd accomplished so far had been essentially done before with different antigens like the one for the tuberculosis bacillus. But now Charles had a solution of an unknown molecule of an unknown concentration and of an unknown potency. There was no time to determine the best way to administer it. All he had was a theory: that in Michelle's system was a blocking factor, which had to that point kept her immune system from responding to her leukemic cells' antigen. Charles believed and hoped that the transfer factor would bypass that blocking or suppressor system and allow Michelle to become sensitized to her leukemic cells. But how much of the factor should he give her? And how? He was going to have to improvise and pray.

Michelle was not happy with the idea but she let Charles start another IV. Cathryn sat holding her hand and trying to distract her. The two boys were upstairs watching for any suspicious movement outside.

Without telling Cathryn or Michelle, Charles prepared for any eventuality when he gave his daughter the first dose of the transfer factor. Although he had diluted the solution with sterile water, he was still concerned about its side effects. After giving her a minute dose, he monitored her pulse and blood pressure. He was relieved when he could detect no response whatever.

At midnight the family came together in the living room. Charles had given Michelle approximately one-sixteenth of the transfer factor. The only apparent change in her status was a slight rise in her fever, and she had fallen asleep spontaneously.

They decided to take two-hour watches. Although they were all exhausted, Chuck insisted on taking the first watch and went upstairs. Charles and Cathryn fell asleep almost instantly. Jean Paul lay awake for a while, hearing his brother wander from room to room upstairs.

The next thing Jean Paul knew was that Chuck was gently nudging him. It seemed like he'd just fallen asleep but Chuck said it was 2 A.M. and time for him to get up. "It's been quiet, except a van came about an hour ago and stopped by the police cars. But I haven't seen anybody."
Jean Paul nodded, then went into the downstairs bathroom  to wash his face. Coming back into the dark living room, he debated whether to stay on the ground floor or go upstairs. Since it was difficult to move around in the living room, he went up to his own room. The bed looked inviting but he resisted the temptation. Instead he looked out between the planks covering the window. He couldn't see much, or even enough to tell if it was snowing or just blowing. In any case there was lots of snow in the air.
Slowly he went from room to room as he'd heard Chuck do, gazing out at the dark. It was utterly silent except for an occasional gust of wind which would rattle the storm windows. Sitting in his parents' bedroom which looked down the driveway, Jean Paul tried to make out a van but he was unable to. Then he heard a sound, like metal against stone. Looking in the direction of the noise, he found himself facing the  fireplace. It shared the same chimney as the living room fireplace. He heard the sound again.
With no further hesitation, he ran back down to the living room.
"Dad," whispered Jean Paul, "wake up."
Charles blinked, then sat up.



Michelle's room. From here he could see the barn, where the previous night's assault had originated, but all he saw now were the pines, rustling in the wind.
Anthony Ferrullo placed an aluminum ladder against the chimney and climbed onto the roof. Catlike, he moved along the ridge to one of the attic windows. Then, using a rope as
a precaution against slipping, he worked his way down the slope of the roof to the base of one of the dormers, where he cut out a small circle of glass. Slowly he opened the window, smelling the musty odor of the attic. Turning on his flashlight, he looked inside. There were the usual trunks and cartons, and he was pleased to see a floor rather than widely spaced beams. He dropped into the room without making the slightest noise.
Ferrullo waited, listening for sounds of movement in the house. He was in no hurry. He was certain Hoyt
was already in position below the front porch, ready to storm the front door. Neilson had insisted that two of his deputies participate. They were to storm the back door after the explosion, but if things went the way Ferrullo intended, the job would be over before they entered.
Satisfied all was quiet, Anthony moved forward slowly, testing each place he put his foot before he shifted his weight onto it. He was directly over Charles's head.
Charles stared at the barn for some five minutes, until he was convinced there was no activity there. Wondering what Jean Paul could have heard, he turned back toward the hall. Suddenly the ceiling joists above him squeaked. Freezing, Charles listened intently, hoping he'd imagined the sound. Then it was repeated.

A shiver of fear passed through his exhausted body. Someone was in the attic!
Gripping the poker and feeling the perspiration on his hands, Charles began to follow the sounds above him. Soon he'd advanced to the wall of Michelle's room, behind which were the attic stairs. Looking out into the hall, he could just make out the attic door in the darkness. It was closed but not locked. The skeleton key protruded temptingly from the mechanism. Hearing the first step on the stairs, his heart began to pound. He'd never experienced such terror.  Frantically he debated whether to lock the door or just wait for the intruder to appear.
Whoever was coming down the stairs was agonizingly slow. Charles gripped the poker with all the force he could muster.  Abruptly the furtive steps halted and there was nothing but silence. He waited, his panic growing.
Downstairs, Charles heard Michelle stir in her sleep. He winced, hoping no one would call up to him, or worse yet, come up the stairs. He heard Jean Paul whisper something to Chuck.
The noises coming from the living room seemed to activate the movement on the attic stairs. Charles heard the sound of another step, then to his horror the knob began to turn very slowly. He grasped the poker with both hands and lifted it above his head.
Anthony Ferrullo slowly opened the door about eight inches. He could see across the short hall to the balustrade connecting to the banister of the main stairs. From there it was a straight drop to the living room. After checking the position of his holster, he unclipped the concussion grenade from his belt and pulled the pin from the timing fuse.

Charles could not stand the waiting another second, especially since he was sure he wouldn't be able to actually strike the intruder. Impulsively he lifted his foot and

kicked the attic door closed. He felt a slight resistance but not enough to keep it from slamming shut. He leaped forward, intending to turn the key in the lock.

He never got to the door. There was a tremendous

explosion. The attic door burst open, sending Charles flying back into Michelle's room with his ears ringing. Scrambling on all fours, he saw Ferrullo topple from the attic stairs to the hall floor.

Cathryn and the boys jumped at the explosion, which was followed by a rush of footsteps on the front and back porches. In the next instant a sledgehammer crashed through the glass panel and its wooden cover next to the front door

just inches from Chuck's head. A groping hand reached through the opening for the doorknob. Chuck reacted by grabbing the hand and pulling. Jean Paul dropped the bat and leaped to his brother's aid. Their combined strength pulled the unwilling arm to its limit, forcing it up against the shards of glass left in the panel. The unseen man yelled in pain. A pistol

sounded and splinters flew from the door, convincing the boys to let go.

In the kitchen Cathryn tightened her hold on the shotgun

as two men wrestled with the already broken back door. They succeeded in releasing the securing rope and pulled the door open. The potatoes swung out, but this time the men were able to duck. Wally Crabb grabbed the sack on its return swing, while Brezo headed through the door. With the gun pointed downward, Cathryn pulled the trigger. A load of bird shot roared into the linoleum, ricocheting up and spraying the doorway and Brezo. Brezo reversed direction and followed

Wally off the porch as Cathryn pumped another shell into the chamber and blasted the empty doorway.

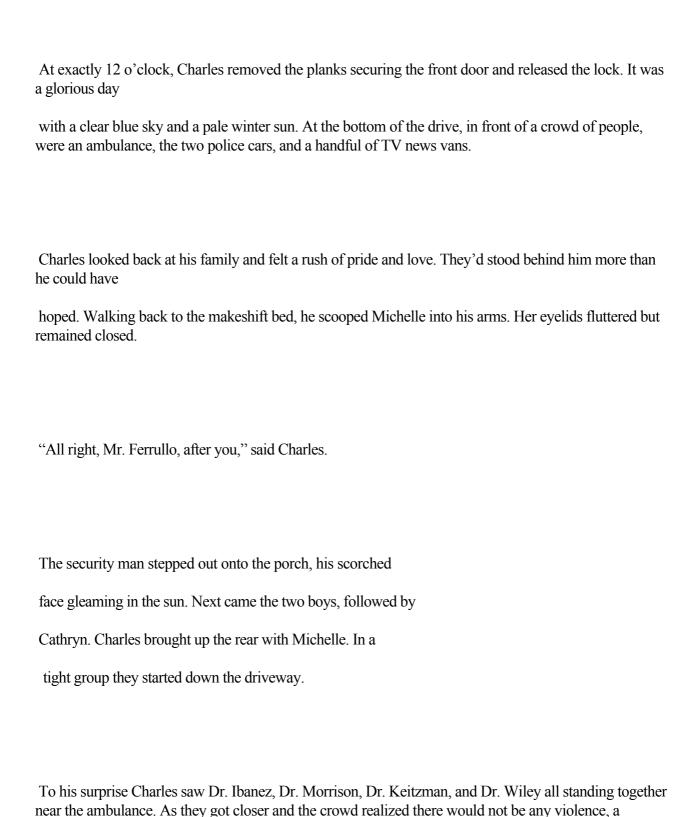
As abruptly as the violence started it was over. Jean Paul ran into the kitchen to find Cathryn

immobilized by the experience. He closed the back door and resecured it, then took the gun from her shaking hands. Chuck went upstairs to see if Charles was all right and was surprised to see his father bending over, examining a scorched and dazed stranger. With Chuck's help, Charles got the man downstairs and bound him to a chair in the living room. Cathryn and Jean Paul came in from the kitchen and the family tried to pull themselves together after the nerve-shattering excitement. There was no hope for sleep for anyone except Michelle. After a few minutes the boys volunteered to resume watch and disappeared upstairs. Cathryn went into the kitchen to make fresh coffee. Charles returned to his machines, his heart still pounding. He gave Michelle another dose of the transfer factor through her IV, which she again tolerated with no apparent ill effects. In fact, she didn't even wake Convinced the molecule was nontoxic, Charles took the rest of the solution and added it to Michelle's half-empty intravenous bottle, fixing it to run in over the next five hours. With that done, Charles went over to his unexpected prisoner, who had regained his senses. Despite his burns, he was a handsome man with intelligent eyes. He looked nothing at all like the local thug Charles expected. What worried him was the fact that the man seemed to be a professional. When Charles had examined him, he'd removed a shoulder holster containing a Smith & Wesson stainless steel .38 special. That wasn't a casual firearm.

"Who are you?" asked Charles.







number of the men began to boo, particularly those from Recycle, Ltd. Only one person clapped, and that was Patrick O'Sullivan, who was immensely pleased the affair was coming to a peaceful close.

Standing in the shadow of the trees, Wally Crabb was

silent. He slid his right index finger under the trigger of his favorite hunting rifle and pressed his cheek against the cold stock. As he tried to sight, the front of the rifle shook from all the bourbon he'd consumed that morning. Leaning up against a nearby branch helped considerably, but Brezo's urging to hurry made him nervous.

The sharp crack of a firearm shattered the winter stillness. The crowd strained forward as they saw Charles

Martel stumble. He didn't fall but rather sank to his knees, and as gently as if handling a newborn infant, he laid his daughter in the snow before he fell facedown beside her. Cathryn turned and screamed, then threw herself to her knees, trying to see how badly her husband was hurt.

Patrick O'Sullivan was the first to react. By professional reflex, his right hand sought the handle of his service revolver. He didn't draw the gun but rather held on to it as he bullied his way between several onlookers and charged up the driveway. Hovering over Cathryn and Charles like a hawk guarding its nest, his eyes scanned the crowd, looking for suspicious movement.

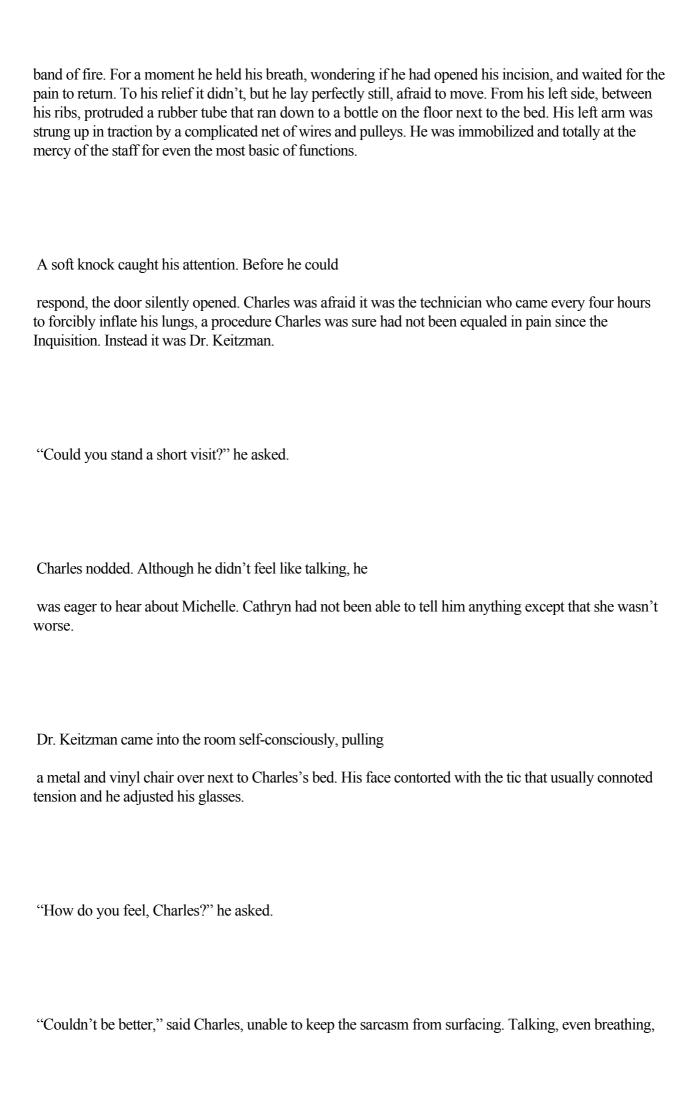
## **SEVENTEEN**

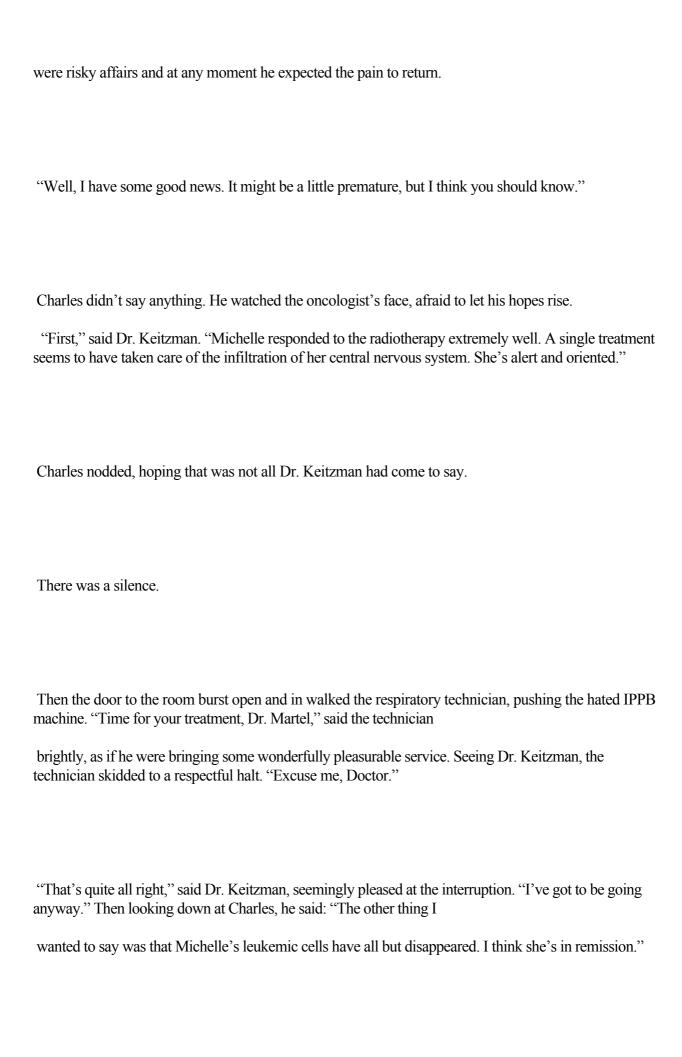
Never having been a hospital patient before, Charles found the experience agonizing. He'd read some editorials in the past about the problems associated with the technological invasion of medicine, but he never imagined the state of

insecurity and powerlessness he would feel. It had been three days since he'd been shot and then operated on, and as he looked up at the tangle of tubes and bottles, monitors and recorders, he felt like one of his own experimental animals. Thankfully, the day before he had been transferred out of the

frenzied terror of the intensive care unit, and deposited like a piece of meat in a private room in the fancy section of the hospital.

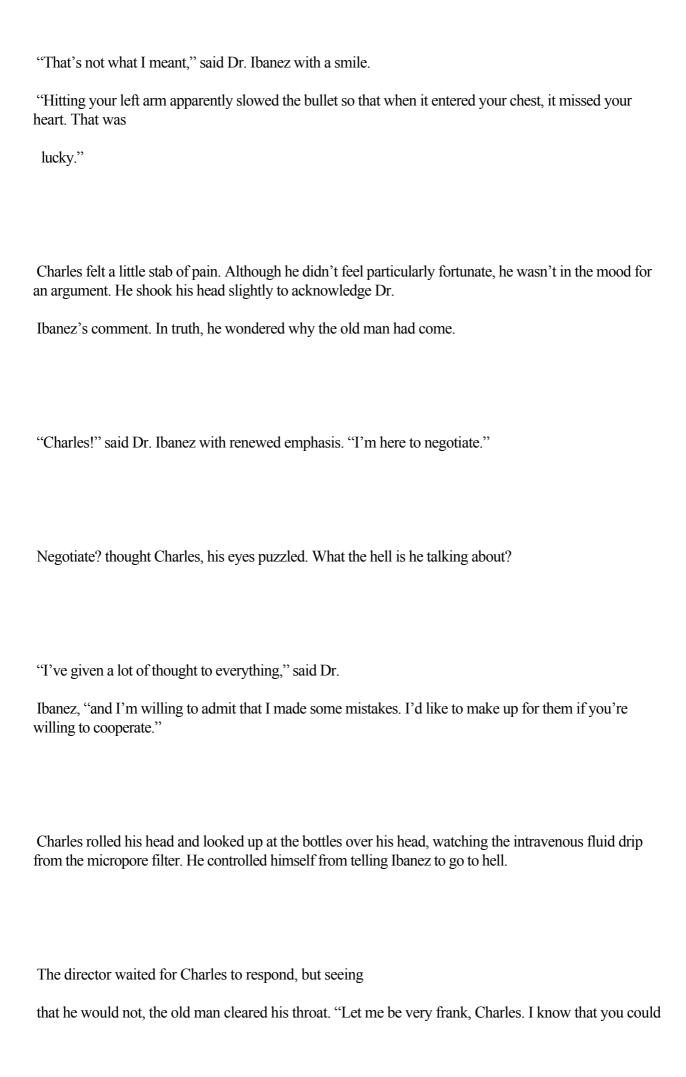
Trying to adjust his position, Charles felt a frightening stab of pain that tightened around his chest like a







Charles's elation over Dr. Keitzman's news dulled the
painful respiratory treatment, even better than the morphine. As the technician stood by, the positive pressure machine forcibly inflated Charles's lungs, something a patient would not do himself because of the severity of the pain. The procedure lasted for twenty minutes and when the technician finally left, Charles was exhausted. In spite of the
lingering pain, he fell into a fitful sleep.
Unsure of how much time had passed, Charles was roused by
a sound from the other side of the room. He turned his head toward the door and was shocked to discover he wasn't alone. There, next to the bed, not more than four feet away, sat Dr. Carlos Ibanez. With his bony hands folded in his lap and his silver hair disheveled, he looked old and frail.
"I hope I'm not disturbing you," said Dr. Ibanez softly. Charles felt a surge of anger, but remembering Keitzman's news, it passed. Instead he looked with indifference.
"I'm glad you're doing so well," said Dr. Ibanez. "The surgeons told me you were very lucky."
Luck! What a relative term, thought Charles with
irritation. "You think getting shot in the chest is lucky?"
he asked.
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For a second, Charles was not sure what Dr. Ibanez meant. If nothing else, the events of the previous week had impressed him with his own impotence and vulnerability.

Isolated first in his house, then in intensive care, he had not realized the extent to which he had become a media figure. As a prominent scientist who had risked his life to save his daughter, the press would be happy to hear any

criticism he might have of the Weinburger, particularly after the bad notices the institute had already received.

Dimly Charles began to assess his negotiating strength.

"All right," he said slowly, "I want a research position where I'll be my own boss."

"That can be arranged. I've already been in contact with a friend in Berkeley."

"And the Canceran evaluation," said Charles. "All the existing tests have to be scrapped. The drug has to be studied as if you'd just received it."

"We already were aware of that," said Dr. Ibanez. "We've started an entirely new toxicity study."

Charles stared, his face reflecting astonishment at what Ibanez was saying. "And then there's the matter of Recycle, Ltd. Dumping of chemicals into the river must stop."

Dr. Ibanez nodded. "Your lawyer's activities got the EPA involved in that affair and I understand the problem will be solved shortly."

"And," said Charles, wondering how far he could go, "I
want Breur Chemicals to make a compensatory payment to the Schonhauser family. They can keep their name out of the affair."
"I think I can arrange that, particularly if it remains anonymous."
There was a pause.
"Anything else?" asked Dr. Ibanez.
Charles was amazed that he'd gotten so far. He tried to think of something else but couldn't. "I guess that's it."
Dr. Ibanez stood up and placed the chair back against the wall. "I'm sorry that we are going to lose you, Charles. I really am."
Charles watched Ibanez as he closed the door silently behind him.

Charles decided if he ever drove cross-country again, it would be without kids and with air conditioning. And if he had to choose between those two conditions, it would be without children. The three had been at each other's throats ever since they left New Hampshire, though that morning they had been relatively quiet as if the vast expanse of the Utah desert awed them into silence. Charles glanced in the rearview mirror. Jean Paul was directly behind him, gazing out his side of the car. Michelle was next to him, bored and fidgety. Way in the back of the refurbished station wagon, Chuck had made a nest for himself. He had been reading for most of the trip—a chemistry text, of all things. Charles shook his head, acknowledging that he was never going to understand the boy, who now said he wanted to take a summer session at the university. Even if it were a passing fancy,

Charles was inordinately pleased when his older son announced that he wanted to be a doctor.

As they crossed the Bonneville Salt Flats west of Salt

Lake City, Charles hazarded a glance at Cathryn sitting next to him. She'd taken up needlepoint at the beginning of the trip and seemed absorbed in the repetitive motion. But sensing Charles's stare, she looked up and their eyes met. Despite the annoyance of the kids, they both shared a building joy as the harrowing experience of Michelle's illness and that last violent morning faded into the past.

Cathryn reached over and placed a hand on Charles's leg. He'd lost a lot of weight, but she thought he appeared

handsomer than he had in years. And the tension that normally tightened the skin around his eyes was gone. To Cathryn's relief, Charles was at last relaxed, hypnotized by the

rushing road and the numbing blur of scenery.

"The more I think about what's happened, the less I

understand it," said Cathryn.

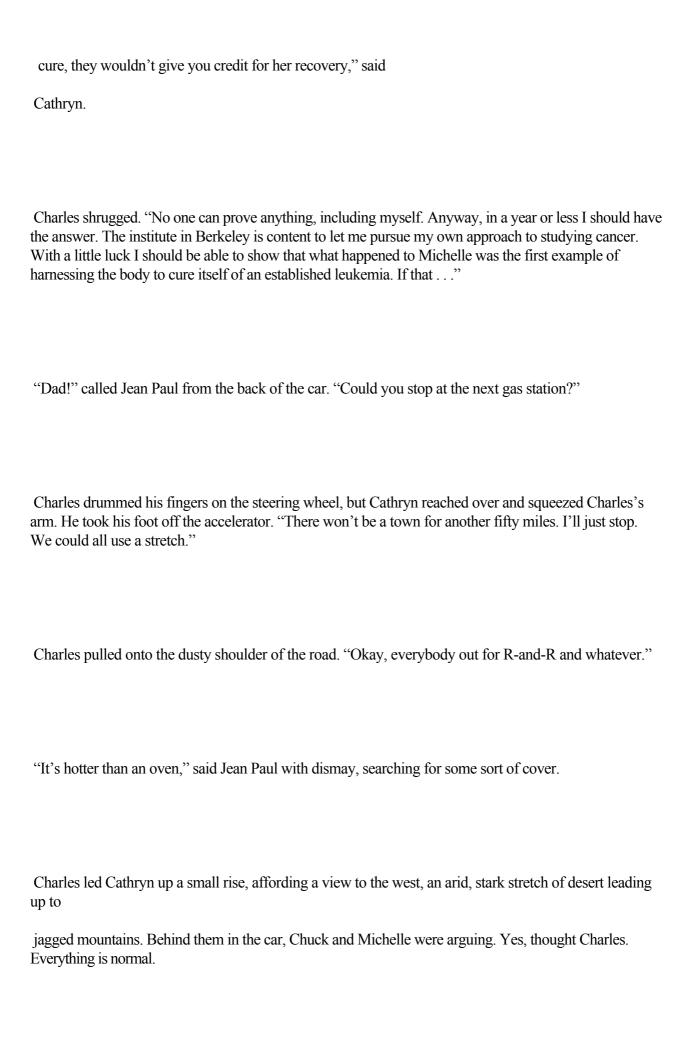
Charles shifted in his seat to find a position that accommodated the fact that his left arm was in a cast. Although he had yet to come to terms with most of the
emotions engendered by the affair, there was one thing he had acknowledged. Cathryn had become his best friend. If nothing else, that made the experience worthwhile.
"So you've been thinking?" said Charles, letting Cathryn pick up the conversation wherever she wished.
Cathryn continued pushing her bright-colored yarn through the canvas mesh. "After all the frenzy of packing and actually leaving, I've never really sorted out exactly what happened."
"What is it you don't understand?" asked Charles.
"Dad!" called Jean Paul from the back seat. "Do they play hockey in Berkeley? I mean is there ice and all that?"
Craning his neck so he could see Jean Paul's face, Charles said, "I'm afraid there's no ice. It's more like continuous
spring in Berkeley."
"How stupid can you be?" groaned Chuck, tapping Jean Paul on the top of the head.

"Shut up," said Jean Paul, twisting in his seat to swipe at Chuck's boot. "I wasn't talking to you."
"All right, pipe down," yelled Charles harshly. Then in a calmer voice he said, "Maybe you can learn to surf, Jean Paul."
"Really," said Jean Paul, his face brightening.
"They only surf in Southern California," said Chuck,  "where all the weirdos are."
"Look who's talking," retorted Jean Paul.
"Enough!" yelled Charles, shaking his head for Cathryn's benefit.
"It's all right," said Cathryn. "It reassures me to hear the kids bicker. It convinces me that everything is normal."
"Normal?" scoffed Charles.

"Anyway," said Cathryn, looking back at Charles. "One of
the things I don't understand is why the Weinburger made such an about-face. They all couldn't have been more helpful."
"I didn't understand it, either," said Charles, "until I remembered how clever Dr. Ibanez really is. He was afraid the media would get hold of the story. With all those reporters milling around, he was terrified I'd be tempted to tell them my feelings about their brand of cancer research."
"God! If the public ever knew what really goes on," said Cathryn.
"I suppose if I were a real negotiator, I should have asked for a new car," laughed Charles.
Michelle, who had been vaguely listening to her parents,  reached down in her canvas tote bag and pulled out her wig. It was as close a brown to Cathryn's hair as she had been able to get. Charles and Cathryn had implored her to get black, to match her own hair, but Michelle had remained adamant. She had wanted to look like Cathryn, but now she wasn't so sure. The idea of going to a new school was  terrifying enough without having to deal with her weird hair. She'd finally realized she couldn't be brunette for a few months and then become black-haired. "I don't want to start school until my hair grows back."
Charles looked over his shoulder and saw Michelle idly fingering her brown wig and guessed what she was thinking. He started to criticize her for stupidly insisting on the wrong color but checked himself and

said mildly: "Why don't we just get you another wig? Maybe black this time?"





"I never knew the desert was so beautiful," said Cathryn, mesmerized by the landscape.
Charles took a deep breath. "Smell the air. It makes Shaftesbury seem like another planet."
Charles pulled Cathryn into his right arm. "You know what scares me the most?" he said.
"What?"
"I'm beginning to feel content again."
"Don't worry about that," laughed Cathryn. "Wait until we get to Berkeley with no house and little money and three hungry kids."
Charles smiled. "You're right. There is still plenty of opportunity for catastrophe."
EPILOGUE

W hen the snows melted in the lofty White Mountains in New Hampshire, hundreds of swollen streams

flooded the Pawtomack River. Within a two-day period, its level rose several feet and its lazy seaward course became a torrent. Passing the town of Shaftesbury, the clear water raged against the old granite quays of the deserted mill building, spraying mist and miniature rainbows into the crystal air.
As the weather grew warmer green shoots thrust up through the ground along the river, growing in areas previously too toxic for them to survive. Even in the shadow of Recycle, Ltd., tadpoles appeared for the first time in years to chase the skittish water spiders, and rainbow trout migrated south through the formerly poisoned waters.
As the nights became shorter and hot summer approached, a single drop of benzene appeared at the juncture of an
off-load pipe in one of the new chemical holding tanks. No one supervising the installations had fully understood the insidious propensities of benzene, and from the moment the first molecules had flowed into the new system, they began dissolving the rubber gaskets used to seal the line.
It had taken about two months for the toxic fluid to eat through the rubber and drip onto the granite blocks beneath the chemical storage tanks, but after the first, the drops came in an increasing tempo. The poisonous molecules followed the path of least resistance, working their way down into the mortarless masonry, then seeping laterally until they entered the river. The only evidence of their presence was a slightly aromatic, almost sweet smell.
The first to die were the frogs, then the fish. When the river fell, as the summer sun grew stronger, the concentration of the poison soared.
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