
THE KEY TO BELIEVING



THE KEY
TO BELIEVING

A NOVEL

BY JANET KUYPERS

It wasn't enough

that dedicated medical researcher Sloane Emerson developed new drugs for HIV and AIDS patients. She needed to discover a cure. Take this journey with her as she discovers that the US government manufactured AIDS, as she exposes the government, saves her own life, falls in love and changes the world.

CHAPTER 8

THE TEMPTATION

There seemed to be something about this Washington, how it kept everything in a state of upheaval. Toby thought of his options at one side of city, and Steve thought of his options at the other side of the city. And at the same time, while flying to Seattle, Carter considered his options.

It was a Saturday morning and Toby sat with his stack of research papers alongside the newspaper. He sat in the cafe, unable to think, trying to decide which paper stack he should attack first. The waitress came and refilled his coffee.

“I’m not going to let myself lean back in this booth until I decide what to read,” he thought. He hadn’t been able to bring himself to grab something to read or lean back the entire time he had been at diner. The newspaper was folded to his right, and the headline of a hopeful Monday conference with Sloane Emerson was listed near the highlights of the week’s events on the side of the page. He looked at that line and thought about her, thinking that she always seemed to have her mind on something, that she always seemed to be accomplishing something, and a part of him was infuriated by it, partially because his luck was never the same.

He refused to believe that his ethic might not be the same as hers. It just drove him to work harder, and he picked up the stack of research papers he should be reading instead of the newspaper and leaned back in the chair. He wanted to think that somehow she encouraged him, without her consciously trying, to get his work done. He knew that he was more than capable to get this work done; it was just a matter of fitting all of the pieces of the puzzle together, in a way that no one to date had done.

At one side of the city Toby sat at the local coffee shop, slumped over in a chair and working on research for AIDS, while Steve lay in his bed on the other side of the city. He only came back to his apartment after leaving a night of quote-unquote sleep with another woman he met in a bar the night before.

He wondered how many women he had done this with during the course of his life.

He would usually come home after a morning like this to get some rest, seeing that whomever he was with usually kept him occupied the night before, but at this point in the game he was not looking for rest; he knew there was none to be found and he did not know how to look for it. He found himself in the same predicament as Toby that morning, and he couldn't consider his usual sense of accomplishment on a morning like this — he was thinking about her, and he was not driven to work, though he was in part driven to settle things with her. He didn't know how to go about changing, he just knew that something had to change so that he could go back to his life being the way that it used to be.

He rolled over, picked up the phone on the dresser and a scrap piece of paper, and made a phone call, leaving a message.

"Hi, it's me, Steve, and I know you probably don't want to hear from me, but I thought I'd leave a the ball in your court. If you needed to talk to anyone, feel free to call, you should have my number, and hopefully I'll talk to you soon."

Steve hung up the phone and stayed outstretched on his bed for a moment, before calling a friend of his to confirm plans for going out that evening.

Carter found himself thinking about her as well, while he sat in his first-class seat as his flight approached Seattle. He got up and walked to the washroom, grabbed the tiny round handle, opened the door and stepped in. He latched the door shut so the exterior sign door read “occupied” and the lights turned on in the little compartment.

He stood in the washroom and looked at himself in the mirror. He didn’t know why he had walked into the washroom; he used the facilities not half an hour ago. Running his hands over his head, Carter tried to make sure his hair was in place. “Why am I doing this to myself?” he thought as he adjusted the cuffs of his shirt. He leaned forward to check the nick on his chin he got from shaving that morning. He shook his head at his reflection as he leaned back and took one more look. He tried to push the wrinkles out of his shirt by sliding his hands over his torso, and then pulled the lapel of his jacket over to straighten his suit. From the bathroom he heard the flight attendant say they were in their final descent into Seattle; the fasten seat belt sign was lit and everyone’s seat backs should be up and their tray tables in their upright and locked position. He took a deep breath and unlatched the bathroom door so that he could go back to his seat and prepare for landing.

When Carter walked out of the plane, through the jet way and into the terminal, a crowd of people was waiting for their family and friends from the flight. Carter walked through the crowd and saw her leaning on the opposite wall of the terminal.

He walked over to her, where she stood smiling. “Didn’t want to join the herd of people over at my gate?” Carter asked.

“I just thought I’d make you walk a little farther,” she answered. She pushed herself away from the wall and Carter hugged her and asked, “How are you doing?”

“Oh, I’m okay. You look nice; why did you dress up for a flight?”

“It would either get wrinkled in my luggage or on me, so I wore it.”

“What hotel is the company springing for?”

“The Renaissance Hotel.”

“Nice choice.”

“Yes, it’s supposed to have a whirlpool bath and fire place in it, but...”

“What, no live-in masseuse?”

“No, the problem is that the company only made reservations for it for Monday, and I leave Tuesday night. I need a place to stay tonight and Sunday.”

“Why didn’t they reserve a hotel room for the whole time you were here?”

“They said every hotel they checked was full because of a conversation that’s in town.”

“Don’t be silly. My place isn’t huge, but I insist you stay.”

“Thank you. Don’t mind if I do.”

They smiled as they walked together down the terminal; the clicking of their footsteps matched in pace and rhythm as they approached baggage claim.

After they got Carter’s luggage she drove them to her apartment, Sloane jiggled her house key out of the lock as she pushed the door open for Carter. “I haven’t had a chance to clean, so please forgive me.”

“It’s fine.” Carter looked around the room. “It’s a nice place, actually.”

He had never seen her apartment before. “Well,” she said as she walked over to the window, “I know it’s not as nice as New York, but I’ve got a pretty good view here too.” She opened the blinds.

Carter sat his luggage on her couch and walked over to the window. He looked at her as she looked out the window. He glanced up at the buildings that stretched out before him. “It is a nice view, especially when you never get the chance to see it.”

Leaning against the window, she asked, “Any preferences for food? And don’t say pizza, because I’m taking you out for dinner.”

Carter smiled. “I’ll let you decide.”

“There’s this great place on the other side of town, but it’s a bit formal, if you don’t mind keeping your suit on.”

Carter liked the idea, and responded, “Sounds perfect.”

Sloane walked over to his bags and picked them up.

“Let me get those,” Carter said reaching over and extending his hand to her.

“Nonsense. They’re going in my room, since you’ll stay there. I’ll take the couch.”

“I’m not going to take your bed.”

“Yes you are,” she sang as she walked down the hallway to her bedroom. She placed his luggage on her bed. Carter followed her to the bedroom. “There’s a little room in my closet, if you need to hang things up. I’ll let you freshen up,” she said, while opening the closet door and pulling out a dress, “while I get dressed in the bathroom.”

Carter looked at her and smiled while she got a few pairs of shoes and

her dress and left her bedroom, closing the door behind her.

Carter looked around her bedroom. Everything was ivory in color, even the bedspread. Her curtains were a rough fabric on a wrought iron curtain rod, tied back with a tan cord. Her furniture was an unfinished white pine.

He walked over to the nightstand next to her bed to turn on the light. Noticing a small stack of books next to the lamp, he picked them up. They were most of the books his private label had printed in the past three years. He knew he had sent her his most recent book on economics, but the rest of the books he had only mentioned to her. He picked up one of the books, one written by him, about the American educational system. A gold bookmark with the initials S.E.E. was at the last page of the book.

His heart skipped a beat when he realized that she had purchased all the books that he had printed, without telling him. For a moment he couldn't stop staring at the books on the nightstand. He respected the way she thought, and was honored that she thought his ideas were worth study. He placed his book back on the stack and started unpacking his clothes.

Sloane slid a navy blue satin dress over her shoulders in the bathroom. It was a simple dress: a square neckline, straight, floor-length, sleeveless. She reached around to the back of her neck and clasped a silver chain around her neck. She looked at herself in the mirror. She added a little make-up: she added a touch of gray to her eyelids and some mascara; and a touch of sheer lipstick. She brushed her hair down and looked at the different shoes she had brought into the bathroom with her. She put a different shoe on each foot and walked out of the bathroom, knocked on her bedroom door, and then stepped in. Carter looked over at her while he was adjusting his tie; all he could see was Sloane, every item she wore only drew more attention to her beauty. Carter thought that she needed nothing more than that simple silver chain around her neck, and that no one else could match the simplicity of that navy blue dress with such elegance and grace.

"Carter, I'm so bad at these things," she started. "I have no idea which shoe to wear. What do you think?" She lifted her dress slightly to show her left foot, which wore a plain black pump with a two-inch heel. She turned her ankle, looking to Carter.

"Next?" Carter asked, and she gently lifted the other side of her dress to show a black sandal with a three-inch heel. A thin strap of black leather wrapped up her foot and twisted around her ankle and tied at her leg.

“Definitely the second one,” Carter said.

Smiling, she let go of her dress, letting it slide around her legs and down to her feet. “Thank you,” she quietly said and walked back toward the bathroom.

She had hoped he’d pick the second shoe.

Carter walked out of the bedroom toward the bathroom and stood in the doorway watching her bend over and tie up the second shoe.

“Do you need help with that?”

“No, I think I’ve got it. Thanks.” She stood up and faced him.

“I didn’t know it was that formal of a restaurant.”

“It’s not too formal, don’t worry — why, I hope I’m not overdressed.”

“No, don’t worry. You look beautiful.”

“You know I just want to show off my new accessory.”

“What is that, your necklace?” he asked.

“No, silly,” she said as she walked toward the bathroom door and put her arm in his. “It’s you!” She giggled as she walked him out of the bathroom. “Who will notice what I look like when I’ve got you on my arm?”

“You’re too much.”

“You know, I could say the same about you.” She smiled as she walked over to her chair for her wrap and her purse. “Ready to go?”

Carter held the door open for her as they left for dinner, and did the same when they entered the restaurant. They walked up six stairs to the main entrance of the Metropolitan, where the hostess stood behind the large mahogany podium. Carter took Sloane’s coat to the coat check while she checked on their reservation.

The Metropolitan was a restaurant in a converted warehouse; exposed red brick walls peered out from behind the occasional large gold-framed paintings and twenty-foot tall white curtains hanging from the ceiling. The chairs were black and the tablecloths were white. Chandeliers hung around the room, and everything seemed to sparkle. In the center of the restaurant there was a stage for a band and room for dancing. The stage was empty, but a piano, an upright base and a few drums were in position for a later performance.

Carter came back from the coat check and the hostess walked them to their table. When they were seated Carter finally spoke.

“This place is beautiful.”

“I thought you’d like it. I think it’s clean. You wouldn’t have preferred

something more... gaudy?" Carter laughed. A man came to their table and filled their water glasses.

"Everything sparkles here. I think that's why I like it so much. What makes it seem beautiful is that everything has glass accents and catches the light."

Carter took a moment to look around the room while his date opened the menu. "Everything they make here is excellent. I've never been served a bad meal the few times I've been here." Carter looked at the wine list as the waitress walked over to the table. He ordered a bottle of champagne and the waitress walked away. "I thought about the wine," Carter explained, "but champagne would match the ambience so much better." Carter ordered the prime rib and Sloane ordered veal Marsala. Carter looked at her with surprise as the waitress walked away with their order. "You like veal?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Oh, I'm used to people claiming it's cruel to eat a baby cow."

"Oh, and it's better to raise it for a few years, and then kill it?"

"You're starting to sound like a vegetarian."

"No, I'm not. My point is that if someone is willing to eat something that has been killed, does it really matter whether or not it was an adult or a baby?"

"I never thought so."

"Well, you probably eat veal."

"Why, yes I do. I just never thought about whether or not you ate veal."

"There's no reason I wouldn't. For that matter, if you're willing to eat the muscle and fat of an animal, why not the tongue? Or the stomach lining?"

"Don't tell me you eat tripe."

"The casing for sausage is pig intestine. Why not the stomach, or the tongue?"

"I think people make a connection when they see a tongue, they think, 'hey, they have a tongue. I have a tongue.' But when it's a patty of red stuff you don't think about the fact that the pile came from a muscle."

"It's pretty sad if they hadn't thought about what they were eating."

"I suppose it is." Carter just watched Sloane as she got more and more animated in her conversation. "I mean, the thing that really gets to me is when I hear someone, and I hate to say this, but it's usually some flighty woman, and I hate to stereotype some women like that, but it's usually the flighty women that say they won't eat veal. Or they couldn't eat rabbit, because it's a cute animal. Oh, and since chickens are ugly they have no prob-

lem with eating their flesh and muscles?”

“Maybe they should call all meats ‘muscle and fat.’ To bring us back to what we’re eating.” Carter refilled her champagne.

“People eat fish, but have fish tanks. Is it because people don’t keep bass and trout in fish tanks that it’s okay to kill them and eat them, but not their angel fish and gold fish?”

“People don’t want to be associated with the death of something, they just want their meat on their table, no questions asked.”

“And those are the same people who have a problem with eating certain animals, or certain parts of animals, or hunting, for that matter. I have a greater respect for a hunter, who knows and accepts the whole process of killing an animal and preparing it for food, than I do for the person that says it’s cruel to kill a baby cow but it’s perfectly acceptable to kill an adult cow.”

“You respect hunters?”

“I respect them in the same sense that I respect vegetarians — because they have a set of beliefs and they are consistent within their set of beliefs. Even if I don’t respect the stance they take, I appreciate the fact that they completely accept their stance, and completely adhere to it, and they don’t kid themselves about it. A hunter knows what he or she is eating, they understand and accept the whole process. A vegetarian doesn’t accept the process, on a fundamental level, and they face that and decide not to eat meat as a result of it, because they don’t want anyone killing something for them, even if they don’t have to do the actual killing. It’s better than the half-wits who shut off their minds so they can have their cows and eat them, too.”

“Have their cows and eat them, too?”

“You know what I mean. These are the people who want to save the dolphins and the whales, but they’ll eat anything else out of the ocean. These are the people who won’t eat ducks or quail but will eat chickens and turkeys. These are the people who wouldn’t think of eating horses, but don’t have a problem with cows. On what grounds do they draw their lines of distinction? It can’t be in logic.”

“But you’re asking people to think.”

Looking up at him, she had to stare for a moment. Her eyes widened slightly when he said that. “I would expect them to think, but no one seems to want to.”

“That’s the first choice people make in their lives — and their most

important choice. To think or not to think.”

“That’s what makes us uniquely human.”

They both took a sip of their champagne.

“Carter, why would anyone want to not think?”

“You’re asking the wrong person,” he answered, then she smiled. Their portabella mushroom appetizer was placed on their table and they started to eat.

“Carter? Every time I have a discussion like this with someone, they usually cut me off and tell me I’m thinking too much.”

“Did I do that to you? I didn’t mean to.”

“No, you didn’t. That’s my point.”

“I didn’t want to.”

“And most anyone else would have wanted to.”

“And that’s why you still talk to me.” She leaned her head down and smiled; it almost looked like she was blushing. Carter continued. “It’s the fact that you think, and that you’re always searching for the truth and accepting no less, that’s what makes me keep in touch with you.”

Those words made her think about her new search for the truth. The smile from her face slowly fell away, and she stared off into the distance.

“Did I say something wrong?”

“No, I’m sorry. I was just thinking about that problem I’ve been running into at work recently.” She thought about telling him right then and there. “Really, it’s too long of a story. Besides, I have other things to think about.”

“Like what?”

“Like the book.”

Carter started to lose his friendly smile when she said that and regained his business-like demeanor.

“Or the great company I’ve got here at this table with me,” she added. Carter smiled again. She looked up into the aisle. “Or the veal, for that matter,” and as she finished those words the waitress came with their dinners. As they finished their meal, three musicians walked to the stage and started getting ready to play.

“You know, I like having you around,” Carter heard her say. “I could get used to seeing you more often.”

“I know exactly how you feel.”

“I think you’re the one person that makes me not think about work all the time. And it’s okay, I mean, when I’m talking with you I’m not wishing

I was working instead.”

Carter smiled at her.

“Can’t you get your office to move to Seattle or something?”

Carter laughed. “That’s as easy as asking Madison to move to New York.”

“I bet they’d do it if I asked,” she said mockingly. “I’m their golden girl; they’ll do anything to make me happy. Maybe I should put a word in about it.”

They continued smiling at each other as they finished their bottle of champagne and the band started to play ‘A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square.’

“I love this song,” Carter said.

“What is it?”

“‘A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square.’ You’ve never heard it?”

“I don’t know.”

“It’s a very ... I don’t know ... it’s a sweet song.” He wanted to say romantic, but something told him not to. “It’s a shame that they’ve got no one to sing the words”. Carter looked over at the dance floor. “Hey, let’s dance.”

“Dance?”

“I’m not bad,” he said, standing up and stretching his hand out to her.

“I wasn’t suggesting you were the one that was bad at dancing.”

“I won’t take no for an answer.”

They walked over to the center of the restaurant and started dancing. Suddenly Sloane felt aware of the fabric of her dress moving over her back and legs. She felt Carter’s hand on her back through her dress as Carter looked at the band while they danced and he said, “It’s the words that make this so beautiful.”

“How do they go?”

Carter waited for a music cue and sang the lines quietly under his breath.

*‘How could he know we two were so in love,
The whole wide world seemed upside down.’*

Carter looked at her and smiled until his cue for the next line.

*‘The streets of town were paved with stars,
It was such a romantic affair,
And as we kissed and said good-bye
A nightingale sang in Berkeley Square.’*

Carter looked at her again before she spoke. "You have a beautiful singing voice."

"Oh, you know me, I just like to get all the attention I can." Carter smiled and looked around, like he had something up his sleeve. "Okay... We're at the end of the song."

She seemed confused and asked, "Yes?"

"You know what that means I have to do."

Her mouth opened slightly and she took a breath. "What?"

"Dip you." And just as the words came out of his mouth he tightened his grip on her and moved his shoulder forward to guide her down. She had no time to react, just to comply, just to trust him and arch her back and shoulders and let her head fall back. She could feel her hair hanging toward the floor. For that instant, when her back was arched and Carter was holding her, she thought of him leaning in and kissing her stomach, and breasts, and neck. And as soon as the thought entered her mind, he picked her back up and she opened her eyes. She only then noticed that the song ended.

Feeling his hand on her back as they went back to the table, she couldn't believe what was going through her mind. She knew she had to slow her heartbeat down somehow; her chest was heaving in her dress. She thought that what she was feeling was noticeable to the rest of the room. As they got to the table, she picked up her purse and excused herself so she could go to the ladies' room.

Walking straight to the counter, she dropped her purse next to the sink, pressed her hands on the counter and leaned forward with her head hanging down. She checked around the room once to make sure that she was alone.

"Why am I doing this to myself?" She said under her breath as she lifted her head and then leaned back and looked up at the ceiling. "This is wrong, this is wrong," she repeated quietly as she tried to regain herself. She told herself to inhale slowly, then exhale. She straightened her head and looked at her reflection in the mirror. She took another breath, methodically opened her purse and reached around for the lipstick.

She took another deep breath as she opened the door to walk back into the restaurant and saw Carter waiting for her. The entire ride home she had to concentrate on anything she could, anything other than Carter. "Think about your work," she thought as she drove him back to her apartment. "Think about the

Shane files. Remember to give a copy of them to Carter, so they're safe. No, don't think of him for these files and let your thoughts go back to Carter again. No, don't think about that. Think about the book. Think about getting the book published. Think about the manuscript, you have to give Carter a copy. Oh, wait, don't think about that. Think about the road. Just get home, keep your eyes on the road, don't look at him, don't think about him, and get him to your apartment. No, please don't think about that..."

"Are you okay? You seem preoccupied."

"Oh, it's just late. I'm fine."

By the time they got home it was almost eleven at night. Carter walked in and took off his jacket. As she closed the door to her apartment she watched Carter slip his jacket off his shoulders; she was momentarily fixed on his wide shoulders. She had to keep telling herself to stop. She walked into the kitchen.

"Okay, I have orange juice, V-8, diet Pepsi, a bottle of Merlot and a bottle of champagne. Do you want anything?"

"Are you up for champagne?" Carter called from the living room. Sloane acted calm: "You're the guest," she called back as she pulled the champagne from the kitchen.

Carter stood in her living room and looked at the magazines on her cocktail table. He picked up *Discovery* and *Scientific American* to see the most recent catalog of Angelique's Lingerie. He was holding the catalog in his hand as she walked into the living room with two glasses and the champagne.

"I didn't know you shopped for lingerie," Carter said, stopping her in her tracks. "You don't seem the type to wear frivolous things," he continued.

Thinking about what to say, she almost told him that she was buying a white terry cloth bath robe, but thought that would seem like she was thinking of him too much. She could say that she was buying lingerie, but it wouldn't be believable. "I don't know how I got on that list," she finally got out of her mouth, "I didn't buy anything from it."

Carter immediately answered with, "But you kept it."

"I didn't think about it" she answered. "Where did you find it? I must have missed it when I was throwing out my mail."

Carter smiled. "I didn't know you had it in you."

"Why are you looking at me like that?"

Carter started to walk around the couch. Sloane put down the bottle and glasses on the cocktail table and tried to follow him.

“I don’t know, maybe you’d look good in this,” he said, pointing out a teddy, and Sloane tried to reach around him to grab the magazine. “Give me that!” she yelled.

“I didn’t know you wanted the catalog that badly...” Carter continued smiling.

“I didn’t know you wanted the catalog that badly, Carter,” she answered. “I didn’t know you looked at women as objects like that.”

Carter pushed the catalog gently into her stomach and waited for her to grab it before he let go. “You know I can’t do that. This is just a side of you I haven’t seen.”

Needing to turn the tables quickly, she did her best to come up with a retort. “I didn’t know you wanted to see me in lingerie that badly.”

Carter smiled. “I don’t think lingerie suits you. That’s why I give you grief for it.”

She felt just slightly disappointed. “And why doesn’t it suit me?”

“I think you’d want someone to love you for you, not because you were wearing something frilly.”

“Check your premises. I never said I bought anything frilly.”

“Okay, I won’t tease you anymore.” Carter leaned back. “Where’s the champagne?”

“Carter,” she said, as she picked up the other glass and he poured both glasses full. “Do you drink this much all the time? Or is it just me that brings out the drunk in you?”

Carter smiled. “Really, I don’t drink much at all. I just like drinking with you. You know, I don’t know if I learned this when I was in Stockholm or Helsinki, but a friend there told me that amongst friends there it is almost a sin to not have food, and candles, and something to drink when you engage in conversation. It makes things more comfortable.”

Sloane nodded her head in agreement. “It’s a good idea, I suppose. I’ve supplied plenty of food and plenty of drink.”

“So we’re just missing candles. Do you have any?”

“Yes, I do, in a drawer over here.” Walking over to a cabinet next to her dining room table, she couldn’t believe how romantic he was making things, without even trying. “It won’t be as impressive as your fireplace, but I hope it’s good enough.” She walked over and lit two ivory taper candles in small crystal star-shaped candleholders and placed them on the cocktail table. “It’s perfect,”

Carter answered and waited for her to sit down before taking his seat next to her.

“So, are you going to tell me now what’s bothering you?”

“What do you mean?”

“Something has been on your mind all night. You start feeling better, then you get tense. We’ve got a full bottle of champagne, and a bottle of Merlot if we get desperate. I’ve got all night here, remember? I’m captive here.”

“I didn’t know you thought of it as prison.”

“If it is, then I’ve shackled myself. Now tell me.”

Carter’s comment made her think for a fraction of a second about tying him to her bed and unbuttoning her shirt. She closed her eyes and tried to think about something else. “I just keep reminding myself that I have a copy of the manuscript for you, I brought it home with me in case you wanted to look at it before Monday. And I have something I’d like for you to hold on to for me.”

At this point Carter was interested. “What is it?”

“Oh, it’s just some files someone gave me. I don’t want something to happen to the copy I have. So I wondered if you’d hold on to a copy of the files for me.”

“Sure. What are they, your will or something?”

“No. It relates to work, it’s some information I’ve received about AIDS transmission. I have copies for myself, but I just want to make sure that the files don’t get destroyed. It’s just a sealed envelope, so it’s not very big or anything.”

“Sure. I can hold on to it for you.” Carter thought her request was a bit strange, but he was more than willing to comply. “Are these files what has gotten you so tense in the past few days? When I talked to you on the phone this morning you said that you had been disconnected for the past day or two.”

All she could see when she looked at Carter was real concern in his eyes. “Don’t worry about it, Carter. It’s just some material I have to do some research on. And I don’t know how sensitive the material is, so I want to make sure it’s safe.”

“No problem. I’ll put it in my safe deposit box when I get back to New York. Is that all the business we have for the day?”

“Who is coming in on Monday to edit and proofread the manuscript?”

“Her name is Ellen Bailey. Her flight comes in at 8:45 Monday morning. Is someone picking her up or should she rent a car?”

“I can have Julie pick her up. She usually comes in before eight in the morning. I’ll call her tomorrow to ask her if she can pick her up and get her

breakfast on their way in.” Sloane leaned back in to the pillows of the couch.

“So that’s all the business we have for the day?” Carter asked again.

“Yes, I promise, no more business.”

“What would you like to talk about then?”

“I was thinking about what we were talking about at dinner. About how most people choose to not think. Why do they do it?”

“They see everyone else not using their minds, I suppose, and when the rest of the world bullies you enough, the average person caves in to the peer pressure.”

“That’s a funny way of putting it.”

“But think about it, think about what they taught you in philosophy classes in undergraduate college. Most philosophers hypothesized that the world was unknowable, that the human mind was impotent. Our minds create our reality. Our opinions don’t matter, but the ‘collective good’ does. What does that do for a person? If they don’t reject it, they feel guilty for thinking.”

“You know, it would make me so angry, the things I had to read for my philosophy classes. I remember having to write a ten page paper once about whether or not we could tell if we were dreaming all the time or not, if we could prove that our life was not one big dream, or if we could tell our conscious state from our dreams. It was exasperating. Why do people perpetuate these myths?”

“Because that’s the way people have always been.”

“For thousands of years we lived without electricity, should we then reject that too?”

“You’re preaching to the converted. I’m just trying to explain why it happens. I didn’t say I agreed with them.”

Carter changed the subject and continued. “I noticed you had my book, ‘The Philosophy of Science.’”

This surprised her, realizing she had left his books on her nightstand. “Oh, you noticed? I put those there just to make you feel better.” She smiled, hoping her joke would cover up her embarrassment. “Yes, I read it.”

“I’m surprised you found the time.”

“You mention the two most important things in my life in the title alone. Did you think I wouldn’t read it?”

“What did you think of it?”

“You know what I thought of it. You know I like the idea of using the

Scientific Method for determining everything in your life. It makes sense. But what I thought was most interesting was your analysis of scientists who relied on faith and lack of reason when it came to philosophy, even when they were so dependent on reason in every other aspect of their lives.”

Her comments intrigued Carter. “Why did you like that part?”

“Oh, I just remember going to Kyle’s wedding, he’s one of my assistants at the lab. He’s a really good guy, and his wife is a very sweet woman, but this marriage, it was a full Catholic wedding, with a full mass and lots of prayers, the whole nine yards. And it just made me think: Does Kyle believe all of this? All day he lives by a code of logic and reason, proof and evidence. Does he let go of that reasoning when it comes to his life philosophy?”

“That was exactly my point. Scientists love science because it helps explain things to them. But they were never taught to use it in the most crucial aspect of their lives — in their philosophy of life. And they never thought to apply it to themselves.”

“I hope you don’t think I’m like that.”

“Of course I don’t. You’re the most consistent person I know.”

“Other than yourself?”

Carter smiled back. “I don’t gauge myself against other people.”

“I would hope not.”

They both sat in silence for a moment and sipped their champagne.

“It’s nice to read a few pages of your book at night.”

Carter looked up from his glass. “Why is that?”

“It helps me to read it, so I don’t think I’m crazy at the end of the day.”

Carter laughed. “What does *that* mean?”

“Oh, you know. Reading a few pages of ‘The Philosophy of Science’ at the end of the day, it reaffirms what I know. I deal with a bunch of irrational people in a day, like people in marketing, or people in lobbying groups that tell us to give away our drugs for free. People tell us we’re being cruel by limiting the number of people that can start taking Emivir, when they don’t know enough to know that we do it because it would be more detrimental if people would have to stop taking the drug because plants can’t produce enough. When I deal with people like that, it’s nice to come home and slip into bed and remind myself that I’m right before I go to sleep. Does that make any sense?”

“Yes, it does. But you don’t need anything to remind you, other than you, other than your mind. Remember, you’re one of the few that made the

decision to think.”

“And you think that’s a good thing.”

“Of course I do, what would make you think otherwise?”

“Oh, I didn’t mean it to imply that you shouldn’t. I meant that most people wouldn’t think it’s a good thing, and that’s the insulting part.”

“Oh, come on, don’t you think your talents could be better utilized if you were a cheerleader, or—”

They started bantering. “Oh, stop it, Carter.” “Or a housewife, or —”

“Oh, you’re kidding, right?” “Or maybe an exotic dancer?”

Acting on impulse, she grabbed a pillow and threw it at Carter on the other side of the couch. “Them’s fightin’ words!” She yelled as she set her champagne glass on the cocktail table.

Carter dodged the pillow, then set his glass down next to hers and picked up the pillow she threw at him. “I challenge you to a duel,” He said, throwing the pillow back at her.

Grabbing the pillow in mid air, she turned and kneeled on the couch, facing Carter. “You don’t think I could actually be a housewife, do you?”

“I think either one of us could be a housewife if we found someone we loved enough.”

She held the pillow instead of immediately throwing it. “But do you think either one of us could love someone that would want us as a housewife? I mean, a house person?”

“No, but the person that would love us, the person we would love that much, we’d want to do things for them. Not because they expect it of us, but because we’d want to. You love someone because you respect them, because they share the values you do. And you want them to be happy, because that would make you happy. So you want to do things for them. And they would want to do the same.”

“You’re talking about sharing the household duties.”

“I’m talking about sharing two lives. The rest will fall into place... When do you have the time to think about these things?”

“I read and I write for a living. What else would I be doing?”

Seeing the ivory taper candles, she noted they were burning on the cocktail table. She rolled her head along the back of the couch until she was looking at Carter. “Have any idea what time it is?” Carter looked down at his watch. “It’s one-thirty in the morning. I think I need my sleep.” Sloane trailed

off as she realized she had something else to say. "I forgot that you might be tired from the traveling. Oh, God, it's four-thirty your time, isn't it?"

"Yes, but I'll be fine. Just let me sleep in tomorrow a bit."

"Not a problem. You can't hear a thing from my bedroom."

"I'm not going to take your bed. I'm not making you sleep on the couch."

"Why not? You offered the same to me when I was in New York."

"I'm not going to make you sleep on the couch, and that's final."

Trying to sell him on her offer, she pleaded. "I'm not going to let you sleep on the couch, Carter. Come on, it's a nice, comfy, king-sized bed... You need to rest. Take it."

"No ... not unless you sleep with me."

"Excuse me?"

"There's room, it's a king-sized bed, right?"

Getting bashful, she looked down for a moment. "I suppose so."

"Sorry you won't be able to sleep naked tonight," Carter said, and she finally threw her pillow at him. "Unless of course you wear lingerie from that catalog to bed..." Screaming, she reached for another pillow when Carter grabbed her arm. "Is this okay with you? I wasn't trying to make you uncomfortable."

"No, it's fine. Let me get some clothes from the bedroom and I'll change in the bathroom."

As she walked into the bathroom Carter blew out the candles and walked to her bedroom. "Oh, one thing, Carter. I get the left side of the bed."

Carter smiled and walked into her bedroom, closing the door behind him.

When she closed the door to her bathroom and turned on the light, she rolled her head back and closed her eyes. She repeated the same phrase in her head over and over again: "Why is this happening to me... Why is this happening to me... Why is this happening to me..." This time it wasn't a question; she didn't ask it of herself; for this one moment she actually did want to suspend her thought. She was afraid of what answers she would find if she looked for them.

She slid off her dark blue satin dress; she felt it sliding over her skin with such ease and thought again of his touch as they were dancing. She closed her eyes and tried to put him out of her mind. She picked up her silk pajama pants and stepped into them. This was her Christmas present from her sister

last year. Her sister had told her that she wanted to get her something that she could pamper herself with, but she knew her sister wouldn't like something romantic or frilly. She looked at herself in the mirror in her dark green button-down pajama shirt and pants. The fabric was soft against her skin. She had owned these pajamas for four months but had yet to wear them.

Mentally she rolled her eyes when she noted she picked this to sleep in when Carter was here.

Knocking on her bedroom door, she then came in, holding her dress in her hand. Carter was sitting under the covers on the right side of the bed. She instantly noticed he wasn't wearing a shirt. She assumed he was wearing pants. "You didn't have to knock," Carter said. "It is your bedroom, you know."

"I wanted to make sure you were dressed."

"Oh." Carter let the space between them be silent while she walked to her closet, hung up her dress, and walked around to the other side of the bed. She wondered if he had done this intentionally, to torment her. She lifted the sheets and slid into her bed. After watching her turned out the light on the nightstand, Carter could hear her slide into the bed.

"Let me know if I kick you in my sleep, Carter," she said.

"Can I hit you if you do?" Carter answered.

"Oh, don't talk dirty to me," she replied, and she could hear Carter laugh softly in the dark. "Good night, Carter." "Good night," she heard from the other side of the bed, and with that she tried to close her eyes.

Sloane was sitting in her office with an interviewer from the Seattle Daily Herald. Tyler was standing at the other side of the room. She agreed to do an interview about how the staff came up with Emivir. She agreed to do it primarily because she knew Tyler would keep bothering her until she did it. But then she thought: now that she agreed to one interview, would Tyler break open a floodgate of demands on her?

When you give them a little control, they'll take more, she thought.

The young reporter put a tape recorder on the edge of her desk and sat. She tried not to fidget; she wanted to be doing anything else but this interview; she felt her time was better spent in the lab. And the process of the reporter asking questions and writing notes took longer than she had expected it to. Tyler stood in the back, gesturing for her to uncross her arms, to

smile more. She hated every minute of it.

“The process of modifying other drugs to get Emivir came about how?”

“We modified the part of the drug that affected its ability to attach to healthy cells so it could fight the virus for a longer period of time in the body. This knocked the virus back quite a bit, but more importantly, it also affected the length of time the human body would accept and work with the drug.”

She watched the reporter scribble down some notes.

“You’re a female researcher.”

“You noticed.”

“I was wondering if you’ve encountered any flack from male researchers.”

“What?”

“Has the struggle been harder because you’re a woman, Ms. Emerson?”

“Why would it be any different, if I’m qualified and capable of doing the work?”

“Women are a minority in the science fields, so I was wondering —”

“And what does this have to do with the drugs we’ve been working on?”

The reporter was surprised that she seemed angry. “Most people doing work in your field are male. I think the public is interested in you in particular because you’re a female.”

“Is that what you think?”

“You have to admit —”

“And they might not be interested because I produced the best results?”

“All I was asking was —”

“You were asking something entirely irrelevant.” She then caught Tyler’s waving arms out of the corner of her eye; she looked up and saw him crossing his arms back and forth in front of him and shaking his head and mouthing the word “no” over and over again. She looked back toward the reporter.

“I wasn’t saying anything about you personally, but the feminine aspect of this story is its draw. That’s what people want to hear about.”

“They don’t want to hear about the research?”

“They’ve already heard about the research.”

“Not when you report it, they don’t.” She glanced at Tyler again, who was almost dancing in an effort to silently stop her. “Is there something you need, Tyler?”

“Maybe we should take a break,” Tyler panted as he walked up to the table and sat on the edge. “Does anyone want coffee?”

“Oh yes, please, thank you,” the reporter answered.

“No, thank you, Tyler,” she said. “We’ll stay here while you get coffee.”

Tyler was angry that she managed to get him to leave her office without them. He slowly walked out of the room.

“I’m sorry, Ms. Emerson, I didn’t mean to offend you. Let’s go on another track. How many hours a day do you work on the research?”

“Between ten and twelve. But usually I take reading home with me, or do Internet work and the like while I’m at home, so I can at least see what my place looks like.”

“So do you get the chance to be very social?”

“I usually — wait. What does that have to do with research?”

“I’m writing a story about you, Ms. Emerson. People want to know how you tick.”

“How do they *expect* me to ‘tick’?”

“What do you mean?”

“You haven’t written stories like this about other researchers. How do they *tick*? They work, because they love their work, because that’s what keeps them alive. They use their brains. Why do you need to hear me say that?”

“That’s not what I’m asking, I’m asking who you are.”

“I’m a researcher. Ask me about my work.”

“But what do you do to relax at the end of the day? Do you have a place in your apartment where you like to unwind, say, take a bath or read a book? Do you have hobbies?”

“What? Have you ever asked a researcher before whether they took baths to unwind at the end of the day? This is ludicrous. I want to stop this dream.”

And just as the words came out of her mouth she sprung up in her bed.

She let out a light sigh as she woke up and exhaled in the middle of the night from her dream.

What she didn’t expect was for someone next to her to spring up after her.

“Are you okay?”

She forgot that he was with her and she jumped again. Then everything instantly came back to her and she let go of her breath and started panting.

“I, I had a bad dream.”

“Oh, come here.” She felt the sheets moving and suddenly he was sitting up next to her; she could feel his legs against her silk pajamas. He put his arms around her shoulders. “Here, lean on me. It’s okay. Relax.”

“I don’t know how,” she whispered and she tried to control her breathing.

Carter put his right hand against her right temple and guided her head to his shoulder. She adjusted her head and felt her forehead against the bottom of his neck.

“It was just a dream, it’s okay.” He ran his fingers through her hair at her temples. “What was it about?”

All she could think was that it would sound trivial if she told him; it wasn’t a nightmare about her teeth falling out or people trying to kill her. “I don’t remember,” was all she could say.

“It’s over. Just relax.”

“You know, I’m not used to this,” Sloane whispered.

“Not used to what?”

“Having someone comfort me from my dreams.”

“You have bad dreams a lot?”

“I think once or twice a week now I wake up like this.”

“What’s the matter? Are your dreams an effort to resolve work problems?”

“No. Usually they’re about losing control of some aspect of my life.”

“You’re fine. You just need some rest.”

He held her in silence in the dark.

Sloane let herself be held there, in the dark, in her bed, something she had never done. She never let herself lose control, and here she was showing weakness and letting someone hold her like a child. She closed her eyes and felt his hand against her temple, then his fingers running softly and slowly through her hair. She felt the skin of his shoulder on her cheek and his neck against her forehead. Instinctively she moved her right hand up and placed it on his chest. Instantly she realized she shouldn’t have done it; to cover it up she made a motion to pick her head up from his shoulder.

“You must be tired,” she finally whispered. “I’m sure you are about to go to sleep again. I’m sorry I woke you.”

“Are you okay now? You’re still tense, and you’re still breathing heavy.”

“I’ll be fine.”

“I didn’t ask how you’d be, I asked how you are.”

“Don’t worry about me, Carter.”

“I’m sorry, but I can’t do that.” Carter looked at her in the light from the window, all he could see was the silhouette of her face and a spot of light reflecting from her eyes. “Here, come here,” he said, and moved back under

the covers and lay down.

Sloane couldn't see in the dark. "What — where am I going?"

Carter found her right hand in the dark and moved it with his left hand to his shoulder. She could tell he was lying on his back and wanted her to lean on him. She complied.

"You just lay here and relax," Carter told her as she slid her left arm under his pillow and leaned her head back down on his chest near his shoulder. She felt his right hand gently gliding up and down her back against the silk of her shirt.

Sloane let the rhythm of his hand against her back eventually lull her to sleep.

Picking her head up Sunday morning, she tried not to disturb Carter as she sat up. The clock read 9:10 a.m., so she got up and walked out into her living room. She heard her laptop computer boot while she brewed some coffee. She checked her e-mail and found a number of documents from Tyler.

The first ones she started to read were the press releases issued by the U.S. Scientific Research Advancement Department.

From: T_Gillian@Madison-Ph.com

To: S_Emerson@Madison-Ph.com

Date: Saturday, 4:42 p.m.

Subject: Fdw: PR_GOV1.TXT

Here's the first one. There have been three in the past few days about us. Hope this fills you in. — Tyler

Thursday, 10:00 A.M.

from the Office of the United States
Scientific Research Advancement Department
Washington, D.C.

Acknowledgment of initial steps of Madison
Pharmaceuticals' integrase inhibitor

The United States Scientific Research
Advancement Department has received knowl-
edge about the recent achievements Madison

Pharmaceuticals have had in working with integrase inhibitors. The United States Scientific Research Advancement Department is looking forward to checking up on their progress. Any work to further the development of knowledge about HIV and AIDS is always taken under consideration.

Sloane skimmed over the rest of the press release. There wasn't much content to it.

From: T_Gillian@Madison-Ph.com

To: S_Emerson@Madison-Ph.com

Date: Saturday, 4:44 p.m.

Subject: Fdw: PR_GOV2.TXT

Here's the second one. There have been three. Hope this fills you in. - Tyler

Thursday, 2:00 p.m.

from the Office of the United States

Scientific Research Advancement

Department

Washington, D.C.

U.S. Scientific Research Advancement Department has been working on integrase inhibitor. They have been working on an integrase inhibitor for the past three months. It would be used in a drug cocktail with transcriptase and protease inhibitors in a joined battle against the AIDS virus. A Spokesperson from the Scientific Research Advancement Department stated that they too are very close to coming up

with a genetically engineered inhibitor, one that is projected that in conjunction with other drugs would exceed the length of time the viral load is down in a subject's body for almost two and a half years.

Mr. Jacob Morton, Director of the Department, stated that they were in discussions with Madison Pharmaceuticals about differences in their research, in order to pool their efforts and come up with a better product faster. Madison has recently released information about progress they have also made with integrase inhibitors.

"We here feel that working with Madison would be best for the public," Morton said.

Sloane looked over this press release. She sent a reply to Tyler.

From: S_Emerson@Madison-Ph.com

To: T_Gillian@Madison-Ph.com

Date: Sunday, 9:36 A.M.

Subject: re: Fdw: PR_GOV2.TXT

Tyler, we weren't talking to anyone from the government on Thursday, were we? No one from my department was, but it says in their second press release (Thursday at 2 p.m.) that "they were in discussions with Madison Pharmaceuticals about differences in their research." You weren't talking to them, were you? Either way, you don't know any of the details about the drug, so you couldn't have told them anything about it. Please issue a statement immediately Monday morning saying that the research department from Madison Pharmaceuticals has not spoken with anyone from the U.S. government, much less the Scientific Research Advancement Department, about our drug. And we never

discussed working with anyone on our drug. Thanks.
– Sloane

She went on to the third press release.

From: T_Gillian@Madison-Ph.com

To: S_Emerson@Madison-Ph.com

Date: Saturday, 4:47 p.m.

Subject: Fdw: PR_GOV3.TXT

Here's the third one. There have been three. Hope this fills you in. – Tyler

Friday, 9:00 A.M.

from the Office of the United States
Scientific Research Advancement Department
Washington, D.C.

United States Scientific Research
Advancement Department is looking into the
research and the work done by Madison
Pharmaceuticals on their level of inte-
grase inhibitors. The research released by
the laboratory at Madison is "alarmingly
similar" to research about to be released
by the United States Scientific Research
Advancement Department, according to a
spokesperson at the department.

"We are not assuming any wrong-doing has
been committed," said Mr. Jacob Morton,
Director of the Scientific Research
Advancement Department. "We just want to
look over the history of how Madison's drug
was created, as well as look into any pos-
sibilities that information could have
been given to Madison about the research we

were doing at the Scientific Research Advancement Department.”

Madison Pharmaceuticals has been contacted and will be meeting with representatives from the Scientific Research Advancement Department Monday.

Sloane leaned back in her chair. Then she wrote an e-mail to Tyler.

From: S_Emerson@Madison-Ph.com

To: T_Gillian@Madison-Ph.com

Date: Sunday, 9:55 A.M.

Subject: re: Fdw: PR_GOV3.TXT

Tyler: You have to know what is going on here. They heard about our reports, so they had to issue a press release. Then they realized what a fluff P.R. piece they sent out when word spread about the success we had been having. So to save their own heads from being thrown onto the butcher block, they sent out another press release saying that they were working with Madison, which they weren't. They knew they'd get caught in that lie, though, so they created a bigger lie: that we stole from them.

And they managed to write their press release so vaguely that you can't even say they're accusing us of stealing from them. They said it so discreetly that when we say we didn't steal from them, we'll sound like the first people that suggested stealing was an option. They're trying to corner us, because they want to stop us.

Why do they want to stop us, you ask? It's simple. They get constant funding from the federal government to do work, and they're not producing results. If they didn't have any competition to produce any results (if we weren't there making progress with the integrase inhibitors) they could just go back to the representatives in the subcommittees that gave them the money in the first place and tell them that they just need more money because the work is more difficult than they

expected. And their constituents, their representatives — what do they know enough of science to judge whether or not their scientists are lying to get more money. So they trust them and give more money to the Scientific Research Advancement Department.

The problem is, now we've come in and done it faster and with less money. In fact, we did it with money we made, not money we had to beg for, not money we extorted from the people via more taxes.

If any smart American citizens looked at Madison Pharmaceuticals and then looked at the Scientific Research Advancement Department, they would get angry about their tax money being wasted.

And that's just what the Scientific Research Advancement Department wants to avoid.

So they make this horrendous claim that we've stolen from them, but manage to say it in such a way that they can deny suggesting it. But we all know what it means, and we have to act like we want to comply or else we look like criminals.

Tyler, they haven't made any indication of showing "the people" any of their own data. Julie will scour past records of journals and magazines to verify it. I would suggest that the Scientific Research Advancement Department wasn't even working on an integrase inhibitor at the time. I bet they have no research on it whatsoever. Yet they're going to attempt to take our records from us, in the name of "cooperation," and duplicate them and doctor them so it looks like they had all of our information before we did.

We're in trouble here, Tyler. This is potentially a very dangerous situation. They could have us up against the wall. They could destroy Madison and put some of us in jail if they wanted to. Why would they do it? To save their own program. To save face. To save the way things have always been done in the U.S. government. If you think I'm overreacting, don't. If you think I'm kidding, don't. This is war. They want us under their thumb, and we have to fight tooth and nail every step

of the way to make sure it doesn't happen. If you get this e-mail Sunday, call me at home – I'll be working there. I'm also waiting on any speeches you might have worked on for me. I'll write up some notes and work on my own speeches while you're doing the same. I'll talk to you soon.
– Sloane

She pressed the send button and watched her e-mail to Tyler disappear into cyberspace. Once again she leaned back in her chair. Then she heard a noise behind her.

Carter was standing behind her with two cups of coffee. "I noticed you started the coffee, but never got your own cup," Carter said. He held forward one mug to her.

"So, what fires are you putting out on Sunday morning?" Carter asked.

"What do you mean?"

"You were e-mailing someone. What's the crisis today?"

"The government, a scientific agency within the government, is claiming that we somehow got information from them about their research, and that's why we came up with the integrase inhibitor so fast."

"Do you think they're saying it because they haven't produced research or any results?"

"That's exactly why they're saying it. No one on my staff would do that. We don't have enough respect for the Scientific Research Advancement Department to think they might have something we want, much less actually steal from. It's ludicrous."

"You sound like you got your work cut out for you. The government is quite a monster to become entangled with."

"Well, David beat Goliath, right?"

"What was that? Did I just hear you making a biblical reference?"

"I suppose I should stop saying 'God bless you', too."

"Or screaming out 'Oh, God' during sex."

Sloane laughed. "That's assuming I've had the opportunity to have sex recently, Carter."

"I'm sure you've had opportunities."

"I suppose... I just haven't found anyone worth having sex with."

Carter let out a loud laugh. "I'm sure with that attitude, the men are knocking down your door." Sloane snapped back, "The men that would be knocking down my door are not the men I want to sleep with."

Carter smiled and paused before speaking. "Want breakfast?"

"Do *you* want breakfast? We could go to a diner, or I could make something here."

"You'd make food for me? As long as you wore an apron..."

Sloane stood up and put her hands on her hips. "This is what I get for being nice," Carter smiled. "Let me make you breakfast," Carter answered.

"I can make breakfast for you if you'd like, really."

"Maybe you could burn the toast for me."

Sloane gave him another dirty look and turned back toward the living room. "Do you want the manuscript to look over today?"

"Yes, that would be perfect. I don't even know what title you came up with."

"We came up with 'Winning the War from the Inside,' how homeopathy can change the lives of AIDS patients."

"Not bad." Carter rummaged through her refrigerator while she set the table and got the newspaper.

The rest of the day was spent in her apartment. Sloane stayed at her computer and worked on speeches and did Internet research about the government's involvement in research on integrase inhibitors; Carter sat on the couch and read the manuscript, made comments and notes on it on his computer, and read other manuscripts he had brought along with him. She occasionally fielded calls from Tyler during the day.

At two forty-five Carter looked up at Sloane.

"Hey, I know this is strange, but I'm used to working alone, and —"

"What, am I bothering you?"

"No, not at all. I was going to say that it was nice working in the same room as you."

listening to what he said made her smile.

"I mean, we're both working on separate things, we don't need each other's input in doing our work," Carter continued, "but it's nice to have you sitting here in the room with me. Does that make sense?"

"Yes, it does. I know what you mean." She slowly turned back to her computer and continued working. At five o'clock Carter got up to make another pot of coffee. "Hey," Carter yelled from her kitchen, "did you know

it was approaching dinner time?”

“No. I had no idea.”

“Want to order out? Chinese or something?”

“Sure. There’s a drawer to the left of my oven, and it has a bunch of delivery brochures in it.” She got up and walked to the kitchen. Carter went through the menus.

“Pick out what you want, unless...”

“What?” Carter looked up from the menus at her.

“Did you want to go out for dinner? I’ve been sitting here working all day and I didn’t even stop to think that you might want to see more of the town.”

“I’ve got a lot of work to do, too. It’s fine if we order in. As long as you light your candles again.”

“How does Merlot sound with Chinese food? All I’ve got is the Merlot; maybe we could go for Italian instead...”

“Chinese food is good, but we could have tea with it instead for dinner.”

When dinner arrived she got silverware and plates from the kitchen while Carter lit the ivory candles and put the pillows from her couch on the floor.

Coming out with silverware, a teapot and wine with glasses, she was surprised to find everything on the floor. “We’re eating on the floor?”

“Why not?” Carter answered, as he grabbed the wine and glasses out of her full hands. “And what do we need forks for? They gave us chopsticks.”

“You can show off your ability to eat with two sticks, but I’d prefer to use a fork.”

They sat down and Carter opened the wine while Sloane opened the little white cartons of food and poured rice on their plates. They ate in silence and then Carter tried to teach her how to eat with chopsticks. He leaned next to her and put his hand next to hers so she could mimic it. After repeated failures, Carter curled his right hand around hers and held her fingers in place as he tried to help her pick up a piece of chicken. Once they successfully picked up the piece of food, Carter’s hand moved with hers as she moved the wooden sticks to her mouth.

“This is useless, Carter. I’m working up an appetite just by trying to eat.” She didn’t want to tell him that every time he touched her she felt more and more nervous, more and more anxious. She became hypersensitive to every move he made near her; she could even feel the hair on the back of her neck rise when he happened to brush against her.

Carter just smiled and said, “You’ll get the hang of it, if you want to.”

They both turned and continued eating.

Carter asked her what she was working on, and she explained the problems Madison was having with the government in more detail. “I don’t want to have to fight to do my work. That’s why I work in the United States instead of in a more controlling country. That’s why I work for a private company instead of a State University. Is there any place that lets you be free?”

“If I find it, I’ll let you know,” Carter answered.

They needed to sleep in order to finish all their work the next day. Sloane called Julie to make sure she could pick up Ellen from the airport, cleaned up her belongings and found her extra copies of the Shane files.

“Carter, this is the folder I need you to keep a copy of for me,” she said as she handed the sealed envelope to him.

“You know, it’s killing me that you’re not telling me what is in this folder.”

“Carter, I think it might be dangerous information.” She saw a look of genuine concern in Carter’s eyes. “I think everything’s fine if I don’t tell you what is in that folder; I don’t think anyone will suspect that you have it. But I’m concerned about telling you what might be in that folder and what it might mean.”

Carter sat down and held her hand; Sloane sat down next to him. “You’re going to tell me what’s going on.” He looked at her closely; he could tell that she was scared.

“Let me just say that another reason I think the government is giving Madison a hard time is because of these files I have. I think they want to get rid of them, or shut me up.”

“What are they?” he asked.

“I don’t know, and I might just be jumping to conclusions. This is what has been bothering me. I should just throw away these files, I have no reason to believe that there is anything truthful in them at all. But a part of me still does think that the information in these files might be true, and that scares me — it scares me because the truth would be really hard to believe, it would be that bad, but more than that, it scares me because it means that I’m believing in things without reason.”

“Do you have any evidence at all that anything in these files might be true?”

“Very little.”

“But you have some.”

“Yes. But it could be doctored evidence, it’s weak at best, but yes, there

is some.”

“If it bothers you, you owe it to yourself to go out and find the truth. You’re not doing this on a whim, you have some evidence. So do some research and come up with the proof you need. But don’t think you’re relying on anything other than your mind. I know that’s your main concern. That’s what I love about you, your rational mind and your unnerving determinism. You think that if you’re thinking illogically now, what will stop you from being illogical for the rest of your life, and becoming one of the mindless out there? But you’re not thinking illogically. The conflict of the evidence you have is bothering you. You haven’t made a decision either way, have you? Then go out there and find the truth.”

When most of what she heard was that he loved something about her, she liked his message and looked up at him as he stood up. “Thanks, Carter.”

Carter leaned over and kissed her on the forehead. “Not a problem.” He walked toward the bedroom. “I’m going to get ready to sleep. I just wish you felt like you could tell me what it was. You can tell me anything, you know.”

“You’ll probably be the first person I tell. I just need to get facts first.”

Carter walked into her bedroom and closed the door.

Walking to her bathroom, she grabbed her pajamas from the door hook and changed. She couldn’t even think about the fact that she was about to sleep in the same bed as him again tonight. She didn’t know whether she’d have another bad dream, or whether Carter would hold her through the night anyway. She knew she had a war to wage, and that was all she could stand to worry about. Tomorrow would be her battle against the Scientific Research Advancement Department. After that, she would have to continue to battle against the virus. She may even have to battle against her government and their lies.

Or maybe even Carter, in the back of her mind.

She turned off the lights in her apartment, made sure her front door was locked and walked to the bedroom.

BOOKS

Hope Chest in the Attic
the Window
Close Cover before Striking
(woman.)
Autumn Reason
Contents under Pressure

private printings

the Average Guy's Guide (to Feminism)
Changing Gears

COMPACT DISCS

music

The Demo Tapes *MFV (Mom's Favorite Vase)*
The Final (MFV Inclusive) *Kuypers*
The Beauty & The Destruction *Weeds and Flowers*
Overstating *Kuypers voice sampling*
Something is Sweating *The Second Axing*
Live concerts in Alaska *Two "Free Parking" shows from The Second Axing*

performance art/spoken word

Live at Cafe Aloha *Pettus/Kuypers*
Rough Mixes *with Pointless Orchestra*
Seeing Things Differently *Kuypers*
Change Rearrange *Kuypers*
Tick Tock *with 5D/5D*
Stop Look Listen *Kuypers*
The Entropy Project *with Order from Chaos*
Six One One *Kuypers*



THE KEY TO BELIEVING

THE NOVEL BY JANET KUYPERS
COPYRIGHT © 2002
ISBN# 1-891470-70-1
\$13²³ RETAIL

MATTHEW BAIN PHILOSOPHER

Sloane is a methodically-driven, sorrowful, very real character, who invokes both sympathy and appreciation at the same time. Sloane puts on a masculine mask in her work, but underneath she's all female and subject to all the sentimental, lovey-dovey gestures.

The entire novel - as far as research and believability - was damn-near perfect. This book is very marketable, because it's got a tough female heroine, romance, realism, people vs. the government theme, omnipresent view-point, and it's got a happy ending.

BEN OHMART WRITER

(The) characters are very good, and consistent. (They) don't promise one thing and do another... I also find the scenes engaging and it makes me want to read more.

CRA MCGUIRT PUBLISHER

I find myself inside the story.

I really like how the dialogue carries the narrative... very natural and human.

I thought it was damn cute that Carter's maid tweaked him a bit on picking out the "right" tie. It humanized him for me that he was nervous about seeing this "friend" of his.

I like Carter, and I like the warmth between him & Sloane. I like his inference that good books make for good audiences.

JOHN YOTKO ENGINEER

When Sloane started to researching, she learned that AIDS was a virus — and she wondered if it could be stopped in the human body.

Madison Pharmaceuticals researchers knew they had to do everything in their power to use science to save people from this disease so that people could live safer, healthier lives.

It wasn't enough

that dedicated medical researcher Sloane Emerson developed new drugs for HIV and AIDS patients. She needed to discover a cure. Take this journey with her as she discovers that the US government manufactured AIDS, as she exposes the government, saves her own life, falls in love and changes the world.

ISBN 1-891470-70-1



9 781894 70707