

**A Stampede of Zebras**

by Robert C. Martin

Ver IX

1651 Harvard St. N.W.  
Washington D.C. 20009  
301-496-5466 202-797-7550

Represented by:  
David Hendin  
Literary Enterprises  
P.O. Box 990  
Nyack, N.Y. 10960  
914-358-7364 212-753-7942  
(Fax) 212-758-3437

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*A note from the playwright:*

The first time I heard the expression “If you hear the sound of hoofbeats, don’t look for zebras,” was at a Gordon Conference — a series of conferences held each summer at New England prep schools on various topics — in the late ‘60s or early ‘70s. A microbiologist, who subsequently achieved considerable notoriety, was trying to explain how the virus he had isolated could still be what he claimed it to be, even though it was immunologically similar to a previously well-characterized virus from another species. Standing next to me in the back of the auditorium was a prominent scientist who simply couldn’t contain his annoyance. In a booming voice, he pronounced this apparently traditional medical expression. The audience, realizing that the “~major discovery” was merely the result of cross-contamination, filed out in silent embarrassment.

Stampede began in a very different form from its present contemporary setting. I was going to write a docudrama about Piltdown Man, that phantasm uncovered at the beginning of the century, which subsequently turned out to be a composite of human skull and simian jaw. I was fascinated by the subject, not because I wished to discover “ who done it,” but rather because the more I read, the more convinced I became that there was insufficient evidence to claim that Piltdown Man was the result of deliberate falsification.

Mistakes happen. But for all the publicity, fraud is still uncommon. And facts, not supposition, are as important in proving fraud as in proving a scientific hypothesis. Worse yet, even fraud- like murder- can be complicated by extenuating circumstances. How to set standards?

Stampede is based on no single case of scientific misconduct, but rather on the many incidents that have occurred during the past several years at Cal Tech, Cornell, Harvard, MIT, the Sloan Kettering Institute, Stanford and Yale. It’s probably happening again somewhere else right now.

A Stampede of Zebras is already being used as supplemental or required reading material in the bioethics courses at a number of medical schools throughout the country. But if you, as a reader, feel that I have only addressed the current moral state of biomedical research, then I have failed in my efforts. For I intend the world of scientific investigation in Stampede to serve as a metaphor for the ethos of our society at large.

— Robert C.  
Martin

Set:

*A cell biology or biochemistry lab with door SR and an office SL. Part of the office and tile office door are on store, but part of the office is offstage. The lab has all kinds of instruments that make churning and clicking noises. There's a copying machine just outside the office door.*

Characters:

Cheryl Russel (Sherri) - African-american f. mid 20s

Jennifer - white f. mid 20s

Chris - white m. late 20s

Howard J. Moore - white m. early 50s

Mike - African-american m. early 30s.

Liz - white f. mid to late 40s

Photographer - white f. 25+ (can be double cast with Liz or Lawyer)

Lawyer - African-american or white m. or f. (Senator's voice)

Time:

1991

Act I Scene I *Morning*

*Sounds of machines churning and clicking. This should be both comic and slightly mocking with syncopated music underneath and lights blinking on and off. Lights rise slowly to dim as if sunrise is filtering in. Music fades. Mike is asleep at his desk. Sherri enters and turns on the lights. Mike groans.*

Sherri: *Been here all night? Mike groans in response. Sherri sets out starting the coffee. Radio goes off with classical music. Mike buries his head further*

*but doesn't get up to turn it off. Enter Jennifer.*

Jennifer: *Hi. She changes the radio to load rock. Mike grabs his head.*

Mike: *Please! Sherri turns off the radio.*

Jennifer: *(To Sherri) Thanks for starting the coffee. She sits at her computer terminal and starts playing Solitaire. Bell sounds from the computer.*

Mike: *Would you turn the sound off if you're going to play computer games!*

Jennifer: There's no point in starting an experiment now, we've got a meeting as soon as Howard gets in.

Sherri: *(Sherri burns herself)* Damn! *Beat* *(To Mike)* Why did you pull an all-nighter? Is something up?

Mike: Just getting my results in shape for the presentation.

*Enter Chris, he doesn't see Sherri and Mike.*

Chris: *(To Jennifer)* Morning baby, sleep well?

*She motions in the direction of Sherri. They exchange mouthed "love you" and "kiss".*

Howard's not in, is he? Good. Got to get some things set up before we meet.

*Chris immediately goes to work. He's a dynamo in action.*

Can I bum some more of that extract?

My old ones aren't working. *(She starts to get up.)* Not now, after the conference is fine.

Mike. Yuch, I better go brush my teeth. *Exit*

Sherri: Chris, can you talk while you're working?

Chris: Be with you in just a second. *A loud buzzer goes off.*

Sherri: I got it. *She pours the coffee into glass beakers and hands them around to Chris and Jennifer as Liz enters. Liz wears overalls covered with buttons advocating everything from 'save the whales' to 'no nukes' and looks a bit like a superannuated walking bumper sticker.*

Liz: *(Urgently)* Where's Howard? Doesn't he know there's a faculty seminar on the responsible conduct of research? He's going to be late!

*They're all amused by Liz' earnestness. No response. Looking around she sees Jennifer playing.*

Hey, you can't do that. You lost. That's cheating.

Jennifer: Lighten up, this is a game.

Liz: So what?

Jennifer: EXCUSE me.

Liz: And you better stop drinking coffee in the lab, that's against every regulation! *Exit Liz. They all laugh.*

Chris: There, I'm done... Sherri, about last night... I got stuck here late and didn't get a chance to return your call. You understand. *(don't you?)*

Sherri: That's all right, you don't have to be nice to me any more.

Chris: Sherri, it's almost two months...

Sherri: As long as you're comfortable with yourself...

Chris: Sherri!

Sherri: Look, can we drop that and talk about something important? I still can't repeat your experiment.

Chris: Don't be like that.

Sherri: Chris!

Chris: Okay. What's the problem?

Sherri: Everything I try comes up with the opposite of what you and Howard published. It's getting very, very frustrating.

Chris: What do you want me to do?

Sherri: Take a look at my results.

Chris: I know what your results are, but you're doing something wrong.

Sherri: Fine. Give me a hand so I can find

out what it is.

Chris: I'm up to my eyeballs...

Sherri: Doesn't it bother you that I can't get the same result you published?

Chris: It bothers me that you've gone ape over a detail.

Sherri: Detail? If I can't do this, I can't start on the project I'm supposed to be working on.

Chris: So get a new project. *She gives him a look of amazement.*

Sherri: Can I quote you on that to Howard?

Chris: Look, I've asked you before and I'll ask you again. Forget about that old stuff and help me on something that's really important—the idea we thought up together. Howard's agreeable and the preliminaries are looking good. Damn good! *(To audience)* It's like this... Sherri and I came up with this really hot idea... Well, she wanted to go back first and repeat some old stuff... It's a little complicated. *(Sudden inspiration)* Let me explain it like this. I was over at the house of the parents of a Russian Jewish friend and his mother made the best blini I ever ate. You

don't know what blini are? Blintzes? Good. So I asked her for the recipe. Simple, she says, "You take some eggs and beat them *real* well with a little salt and sugar. Add flour until the batter's thick, not pasty, thick. Then add water until it's thin, not watery, thin." That was the whole recipe. You know what? They came out perfect the first time I made them. If you know what you're doing, you get a feel for it. So when something new comes along, you don't have to waste a lot of time to get it to work.

*(In character)* How about it? Drop trying to repeat that old stuff and let's team up on this.

Sherri: Chris, we've gone over this a million times. Just set me up so the old experiment works and I'll go off in my own direction.

*Chris expresses exasperation. Enter Howard. He heads for his office.*

Howard: Be with you people in just a second. *Exits into office and picks up the phone.*

Sherri: Maybe we should put this on hold.

Chris: No, no. Let's get it out and over with. Tell me what you've done.

Sherri: *(To audience)* So I relate in incomprehensible technical terms all the different things I've tried.

Chris: *(To audience)* And I raise some new possibilities.

Sherri: *(To audience)* Which are just a bit insulting in their simplicity.

Chris: *(To audience)* But I'm pleasant about it.

Sherri: *(To audience)* And I'm very professional in response.

Chris: *(To audience)* So I offer some fairly complicated reasons why it might not be working.

Sherri: *(To audience)* Which seem a little far-fetched, and Chris knows it. *(In character)* Any other ideas?

Chris: *(Snaps his fingers as he suddenly remembers)* Glass test tubes! That's it. I forgot all about it. There's something in the Falcon plastic that screws up the reaction.

Sherri: *(Suspiciously)* Why isn't that in the paper?

Chris: We had to cut the manuscript and that came out by mistake. I'm sorry... I'm sorry you lost all this time.

Sherri: You're sure it's only the plastic?  
You're pretty good with the run around.

*Chris glares.* Okay, just so the experiment works.

Howard: *(From office)* Chris, can you make it two weeks from Friday when I get back from the coast?

Chris: What?

Howard: I've got that reporter on the phone and he wants to know if he could send over a photographer on the 28th to take some pictures. *Enter Mike.*

Chris: Anytime is fine for me. *Crosses to office door.*

Howard *(Into phone.)* Sure, but can he call you back in about an hour? We're starting a meeting. Good. *(He hangs up)* He wants you to call back.

Chris: Howard, can I talk to you for just a second? *Howard looks at his watch.*

Howard: What's up? Chris closes the office door.

Chris: Look, I realize this may not be a good

time and I know you have budget constraints and all that...

Howard: *(Impatiently)* Yeah.

Chris: I shouldn't complain... *(Howard signals him to get on with it.)* Well, I don't think it's quite fair to load me with a lot of scut work that any technician could do at the same time I'm helping two postdocs get off the ground.

Howard: What's the matter? Is Jennifer bugging you?

Chris: It's not that. Jennifer's doing real well. Sherri's still having problems... but those are hard experiments. It's just that I haven't got time for my own work.

Howard: Sherri still can't duplicate our results?

Chris: Give her a little time.

Howard: She's been at it for almost a year.

Chris: Not quite. She spent most of the first semester filling in some of the holes in her training.

Howard: Aren't you being a little overly

protective?

Chris: What do you mean?

Howard: Mike tells me she's all thumbs; that she can look at a test tube and it'll jump out of the rack and spill on the floor. You remember that little incident with the acid.

Chris: Sherri's dexterity is none of Mike's business. The acid was an accident.

Howard: You talked to her about it?

Chris: No. What could she possibly have said? Look, she's damn smart.

Howard: Chris, don't let your romantic interests get in the way of solid judgment.

Chris: Sherri and I split up over a month ago.

Howard: Oh. *Beat* I really am committed to affirmative action, but...

Chris: Howard, you hired Sherri because of her references, not out of any kind of altruism.

Howard: *(Laughing)* You're right. I've never seen recommendations like those. They were even better than yours. Of course I didn't

recognize the names of most of her mentors. *Starting towards door.* I guess I could arrange for you to get some help from one of the technicians- part time.

Chris: Thanks, but I was thinking more along the lines of your asking Sherri to switch to what I'm working on... *(Listing off reasons with his fingers.)* She deserves as much credit as I do for the idea; it would be a big help to me; and it would get her out of the rut she seems to have gotten herself into.

Howard: Sounds reasonable. Jesus, we better get started.

*They cross from the office to the table which has been pushed aside and which has coffee and doughnuts on it. Everyone takes his place without comment. There should be something funny about the routine way in which they do this.*

Howard: Who wants to go first? Mike?

Mike: I've Xeroxed my results. *(He hands around papers)* *(To audience)* The presentation took half an hour. It was all new work and pretty damn original, if I say so myself. But what does Howard focus on?

Howard: There's a fair amount of scatter in

your data. Maybe Chris could give you a few hints.

Mike: I know how to get rid of the scatter myself, thanks. This is preliminary stuff.

Howard: Sure. Does anyone have any questions or comments?, because I do.

Chris: *(To audience)* I don't mean to be critical, but I point out that an important control is missing.

Mike: *(To audience)* And I point out that a related control has been run.

Chris: *(Nicely, almost solicitously in character)* But it's not the same thing. I may be splitting hairs, but sometimes you can get fooled.

Howard: Exactly what I was going to suggest.

Sherri: Not good enough.

Howard: What?

Sherri: Not good enough. If we're talking about nailing things down an even more important experiment has to be run. *(To audience)* And I tell them what it is.

Howard: Excellent point.

Mike: Exactly! That's what I have listed in my notes as the first thing to do next. *(Showing Howard)* See?

Sherri: Hey, I'm sorry Mike, I didn't mean to anticipate...

Mike. *No problem.*

Howard: Anything else? Keep up the good work. Sherri?

Sherri: *(Very discouraged)* I don't have anything to report again this week.

Howard: I understand. We'll talk. Jennifer?

Jennifer: I think I have something really exciting.

*She looks at Chris who smiles back.*  
*(To audience)* Well, I guess it wasn't that exciting. Mike fell asleep and Howard was nodding.

Howard: *(To audience)* Even bright ideas related with a lot of youthful enthusiasm don't make up for a lack of hard facts. *(To Jennifer, gently)* You need results before you start building sand castles. Chris, don't forget to

call that reporter. *Chris & Jennifer exit.*

*(To Sherri)* Would this be a good time for us to talk? *(They cross to his office and close the door.)* I gather your experiments haven't been going too well.

Sherri: They haven't been going at all.

Howard: Is there anything I can do to help? *(Sherri shakes her head 'no.')* I wonder if you should take a break from them for a while; drop trying to duplicate Chris' old results and work on something else. Like what Chris is doing now- it's partly your idea.

*(Sherri just sits there looking miserable.)* It's hard being in a competitive environment like this- I don't mean among ourselves but the field in general. Particularly when you're starting out with something of a disadvantage. *(Sherri suddenly perks up.)* Your background. I'm not telling you anything you don't know. You're the one who suggested that you take some additional courses to get yourself really up on things. *(Changing subject)* Look, the name of the game is productivity.

Sherri: You mean like Chris?

Howard: Well, yeah. For a young postdoc, Chris has been very productive. He's put in a lot of sweat and he's been lucky. Research is

grueling work. You just have to stick to it.

Sherri: I've been doing the same damn thing for six months.

Howard: That's why maybe you need a change.

Sherri: You just said stick to it. Now you say I need a change. Which is it?

Howard: Look, Sherri, I just want to let you know that if you're having trouble... I understand.

Sherri: Understand what? *She's more defensive than belligerent in the following.*

Howard: This is a tough business.

Sherri: I can hack it.

Howard: I'm sure you can.

Sherri: But?

Howard: But nothing.

Sherri: What are you trying to say?

Howard: Well, you really haven't gotten very far on this problem.

Sherri: Because it doesn't work.

Sherri: Nothing...

Howard: Because you haven't been able to make it work.

Howard: Come on, out with it.

Sherri: *(On the verge of tears)* I know.

Sherri: Chris is seeing Jennifer.

Howard: Chris has said nothing but good things about your work, but...

Howard: Oh? Oh! I... I don't know about those things.

*Sherri breaks down in tears at the mention of Chris' name. What did I say? Howard's bumbling should be as funny as possible.*

Sherri: I'm sorry, I'll pull myself together. I didn't mean to bother you with my problems. *(Bumbling hands her a box of Kleenex)*  
Thanks.

Sherri: *(Sniffling)* Ahhh...

Howard: Any time.

Howard: Can I get you something?

Sherri: I really would like to keep working on this project. I still think it's terribly interesting. Chris suggested this morning that you left out of the published report that you can't use plastic tubes. Maybe it's as trivial as all that.

Sherri: *(Sniffling)* No, everything's just fine!

Howard: A career in science isn't everything. I mean for some of us it is, but not everyone...

Howard: He did? *(casually)* I don't remember a thing about that... *(brushing it off)* of course he did all the experimental work. Oh, well, I still think you should get onto something that's working. You seem to be right on top of Mike's stuff. Maybe you could collaborate with him or Jenni... I guess it would make more sense with Mike. I'd be happy to talk with him.

Sherri: I'm not crying about science.

Howard: You're not?

Sherri: Of course not!

Howard: Then what?

Sherri: Can I give it just a few weeks more?

Howard: Sure. *Sherri composes herself and starts to leave. Howard closes the door after her and exits to the offstage part of his office. In the meantime Mike has gotten up from his desk and has started working.*

Mike: You look terrible.

Sherri: Thanks for noticing. *He responds with a look to the effect 'I didn't mean it like that.'* Sorry.

Mike: Hey, thanks for the little put down of you know who.

Sherri: I didn't mean to steal your thunder.

Mike: The idea was down on paper so you didn't steal anything. And it's about time Howard got the word that Chris isn't the only one around here with a brain — even if he is the only one with luck.

Sherri: What about Jennifer? She seems to have her share of good fortune.

Mike: You're better off without him.

*(Embarrassed)* Oh, you mean her

experiments... Well let me tell you, Chris has his hand in that too... I better keep my mouth shut, huh?

Sherri: Let's just talk about your work.

Mike: Really? I'd enjoy that. *Lights.*

Scene 2 *Howard and Chris are alone. Howard is taking pictures of Howard and Chris while the others are at work. Howard has his white coat on.*

Photographer: *(To Howard)* Is that the way you would hold it if you were doing an experiment? It looks a bit awkward.

Howard: *(Chris shows him how)*  
Thanks.

Photographer: Much better. Chris would you look over Dr. Moore's shoulder. Good Hold it. Think Big Award. Terrific! That should do it. Just out of curiosity- I don't know much about science- could you give me the gist of what this work you and Chris did is and why it's important?

Howard: *(To audience after clearing his throat)* Well, ah, jargon, jargon and more jargon. On the lecture circuit I'm considered someone with a gift for clear presentation. Of

course that's because everyone else is completely unintelligible. But it's not only my fault I can't communicate with you. Most of you don't know a newt from a neutron. Trying to tell

you what we're doing would require my explaining a complex problem in terms of some idiotic and simplistic analogy. So I stick to jargon. It makes me sound very erudite. *(In character)* Is that clear?

Photographer: I'm not sure I followed all of it.

Chris: Maybe I can clarify it a bit.

Photographer: I'd appreciate that.

Chris: It's really very simple. *(To audience)* You see, I've watched a lot of Carl Sagan. You can say almost any stupid thing you want, if you do it with authority and enthusiasm and throw in key words along the way like CANCER which everyone knows about and HEART DISEASE which gets the over 50 crowd. But be very careful with CURE — it can come back to haunt you. On the other hand, BREAKTHROUGH is a sure winner. A knowing smile also activates the sex hormones, which makes those of the opposite sex think we understand more than we really do. CHARM. *(In character)* Does that make sense?

Photographer: Oh, yes. Well, that should do it. Could someone point me toward the elevator?

Chris: Let me take you down.

Photographer: Thanks. *They exit.*

Howard: Jesus, look at the time. I better get to work on that proposal. Jennifer, when you get a chance could you drop this off in the secretary's office?

*Crosses to office exits offstage.*

Jennifer: *(To audience)* In case you haven't gotten the picture, and you think there's a lot of egalitarianism and bonhomie around here, think again. This place is as structured as any corporate office. And lowest on the totem poll- lower even than the technicians and the secretaries is the newest postdoctoral fellow- postdoc for short. That's me. Chris is about the only one around here who doesn't pull that seniority shit. That's part of the reason I took an instant liking to him. Well, more than just a liking. Listen, don't get the wrong idea about him from Sherri. He's no sleaze bag. Things were pretty chilly between them before the two of us became serious. Not that I didn't help them along. *(Beat.)* About two months ago I invited Chris over for some dinner. He called from the lab to say he couldn't make it

because... I don't even remember what his excuse was. Anyhow I said I'd bring the food in so he could keep working. He said not to bother. Except he said it a little too convincingly, if you know what I mean. Later Mike told me there had been quite a scene between the two of them- partly over me, partly over the fact that Sherri was bugging him over that stupid experiment. But it was sort of a lovers quarrel that ended- you know how. That's what was happening when I arrived- (*understood: They were going at it*) in Howard's office. They never saw me, never knew I was there, but I was so angry... Well, I spilled acid all over Chris' desk. He never even saw it that evening. When I came in the next morning he had just arrived. The poor guy was in a state of shock. I'm not sure exactly what I said, but he was enormously grateful. I guess he assumed Sherri had done it... before... In any case, he was certainly a lot more attentive after that. Now don't get the wrong idea. I'm not a sick puppy- I really love the guy. *Exit.*

Sherri: (*Sees Mike juggling several beakers*)  
Can I help? Goes to help.

Mike: I'm okay!

Sherri: I'm not that accident prone! (*Softer*)  
Sorry, I guess I'm not much good for anything

these days.

Mike: Don't blame yourself because some dumb experiment isn't working.

Sherri: Then who should I blame?

Mike: The C.I.A. Bill and Hillary are too nice.

Sherri: Mike, look these over and I'll watch the spectrophotometer, huh?

*She hands him sonic papers.*

Mike: Again? How many times are you going to do this experiment?

Sherri: Don't be a wise-guy. I changed the conditions slightly. I want you to go over those results with a fine tooth comb.

Mike: That would require dinner.

Sherri: Not tonight, Mike.

Mike: (*Disappointed*) Sure. Mind if I turn on some mood music?

Sherri: It depends what your mood is.  
*He puts on some country western and she signals for him to turn it down. Beat.* Am I making a mistake?

Mike: Hey, I can't read that fast.

Sherri: No, I mean about sticking to this experiment. Am I doing it just to spite Chris?

Mike: What brings this on?

Sherri: If it works, what he's doing now is *infinitely* more important than my repeating his old experiment. And he's gathering a freezer full of materials I could have my name on if I let go.

Mike: Is that what you want?

Sherri: Will you please drop that psych 101 voice.

Mike: You think that might get the two of you back together?

Sherri: It's not that. Sure it still hurts, but Chris is right, the two of us would never have worked out. He likes to intuit things; I like the methodical approach. He loves chaos; I prefer order. Hell, he'll even scat to Mozart.

Mike: Opposites attract.

Sherri: Yeah, but if they get too close they annihilate one another.

Mike: So why go back?

Sherri: That's what I'm saying. I could drop this old stuff and work on the new thing because I would know I wasn't trying to get back with Chris.

Mike: You realize that if you did, no matter how hard you worked, Howard would still consider it Chris' project, not yours.

Sherri: That's another "wrong" reason for not dropping this. Chris would stand up for me and Howard would have to come around eventually. So why shouldn't I get some of the kudos for an important idea?

Mike: It sounds like you've made up your mind. Or is there some "right" reason for sticking to it?

Sherri: That's what I'm asking you.

Mike: You mean if you think something's wrong do think you have some kind of moral obligation to set it right?

Sherri: Something like that.

Mike: No. Your job right now is to get some work done, publish a few papers, build a reputation and find a job. Sure, if this (*the*

*experiment he's holding*) were some BIG THEORY you could punch holes in and make yourself a name that would be one thing. But in the first place, it would be Howard's theories you were punching holes in- not politic. And in the second place, this only affects a small part of Howard's grand scheme. In other words, this is small time stuff. If Chris is wrong it'll be forgotten and who besides Liz will ever give a damn?

Sherri: You think so?

Mike: I know so. You said yourself that you should be getting some credit for what Chris is squirreling away in his freezer. Here, take this and trash it.

*Tries to return papers.*

Sherri: Look the results over while I think about it, huh?

*(She paces up and down looking at the papers then goes over to the table and erases something and changes it)*

What are you doing?

Mike: Cleaning up your results.

Sherri: You can't do that; you can't change the numbers.

Mike: I'm not changing the numbers. You

did the experiments in duplicate, right?

Sherri: Right.

Mike: In three of the cases, the duplicates don't agree.

Sherri: Yeah.

Mike: But you still averaged them.

Sherri: That's what you're supposed to do.

Mike: Not if it's obvious that there's something wrong with one of the values. Then you can throw the wrong one out.

Sherri: But how do you know which one is wrong?

Mike: The one that doesn't fit with the rest of the results.

Sherri: That's not what I was taught.

Mike: Not everything you need to know is presented in class lectures. *(Half jokingly)* A line looks more convincing if there are a lot of points on it and not peppered all over the place. That's what they mean when they say there's an art to science. Here you go. *(Hands back the papers.)*

Sherri: Mike, I can't do that. That's dishonest.

Mike: No it's not. Experiments are never perfect. There's nothing wrong with cleaning up the results a little bit. It's expected. Hell, you heard how Howard complained about the scatter when I gave him my raw data. How do you think Chris gets such beautiful curves?

Sherri: I've never seen Chris do anything like that.

Mike: Who do you think taught me?

Sherri: Just because you don't like Chris...Look, forget about cleaning up the data. Take my results just the way they are. Are my conclusions right or wrong?

Mike: You're right. What did you expect?

Sherri: Then how can I drop this? (Mike gives a look of disgust.) You know what it means?

Mike: Of course I know what it means. Chris made a mistake. He's not infallible. You should still drop it and get onto something important.

Sherri: But...

Mike: Sherri, look, there's no one I'd rather bring down a peg than Chris, but mistakes happen. Howard's a scientist; he knows that. What's the big deal?

Sherri: The big deal is that if I'm right, Chris and Howard are way out on a limb with the new stuff.

Mike: What?

Sherri: You claim that the experiment I'm trying to repeat is just a small part of Chris and Howard's last paper, right? Okay, but it was crucial. Without it, there were half a dozen other explanations possible. That's why this is so important. If it's wrong, their whole theory is on very shaky ground and the chances of the new experiment working are one in a thousand.

Mike: You're getting carried away.

Sherri: Read their paper. Carefully!

Mike: I have read it carefully!... (*reflectively*) and you might be right about this experiment being crucial. (*Recovering*) Except you're forgetting one very important fact that makes the whole argument moot. Chris' new experiment IS working.

Sherri: I know... and I don't understand.

Lights

Scene 3 The next day.

*The five are sitting around at a data session that's just ending.*

Sherri: *(To Howard)* So it looks like there's something wrong with what you and Chris published.

Howard: Hm... It certainly isn't clear to me what the problem is.

Chris: *(Annoyed)* Okay, I guess it requires looking into.

Howard: Chris, I can't believe it's anything serious. What you're doing now wouldn't be working if it were. Pull the original data and the two of you can go over it. I'd give you a hand, but I've got that conference in Utah next week and one in Naples the week after.

Chris: *(Harassed)* This is a really lousy time for me. The new stuff is at a critical stage. It's going to take a couple of days before I can go through the notebooks and copy out what you need.

Sherri: Why don't you just give them to me? I can go through them. I've got lots of

time.

Howard: He'll get them for you.

Sherri: Forget I said anything.

Howard: Anything else?

Mike: You asked me to remind you about getting off that letter of recommendation.

Howard: Right. By the way, Jennifer, nice work. Chris, could you come in for a few minutes? *(As they cross into office.)* It sounds like your new experiment is really coming along. It couldn't come at a better time. We need a big one. Bad. *(Closing the office door.)* So what do you think?

Chris: About what?

Howard: Sherri's results. *(Chris shrugs)* Chris, is there anything wrong with your old data?

Chris: Like what? I didn't fake it, if that's the question.

Howard: That wasn't the question and you know it. The question is why is Sherri getting what she's getting?

Chris: How the hell am I supposed to

know?

Howard: That's not an answer.

Chris: I'm sorry. You yourself said that what we're doing now shouldn't be working if that were wrong.

Howard.. *(To himself)* She made a pretty convincing case.

Chris: Not to me, she didn't.

Howard: Mike seemed pretty certain.

Chris: So I should spend my time proving the earth really is round?

Howard: You're that positive about your results?

Chris. Sure, I COULD have made a mistake. But nothing I heard this morning convinces me of it. Mike is certain about lots of things he doesn't understand. Just because he got his PhD at Cal Tech...

Howard: Chris! I don't like that kind of talk.

Chris: In the last two years I've had four papers and Mike still hasn't finished one.

Howard: This conversation is getting us nowhere.

Chris: Sorry. I believed you when you said you wanted to know what I thought.

Howard: Okay!... Let's call it a draw.

Chris: Howard, I'm working my butt off.

Howard: I understand. But you get those notebooks to Sherri! *Beat.* ...when you get a chance.

Chris: Fair enough. *Lights.*

Scene 4 *Three weeks later. Mike and Sherri are sitting silently looking at one another.*

Sherri: It's three stupid weeks!

Mike: Tell me about it.

Sherri: What am I supposed to do?

Mike: How many times do I have to repeat myself?

Sherri: You still don't believe I'm right...

Mike: Of course I believe you're right...

But it's got to be because Chris left something  
Out of the paper. Some detail.

Sherri: Okay! All I'm trying to do is find  
out what that detail is.

Mike: I don't like it.

Sherri: I'm not asking you to like it.  
I'm not even asking you to help. All  
I'm asking you to do is keep an eye out  
for me.

Mike: Why me?

Sherri: Who do you want me to ask?  
*(Sarcastically)* Jennifer? She's home, sick.

Mike: If you want to do it, I'll step out of  
the lab.

Sherri: Not good enough. If I were certain  
Chris couldn't come walking in through that  
door I wouldn't need you. But that maniac is  
here twenty-four hours a day. You can never  
be sure he won't show.

Mike: Come really late at night.

Sherri: And trip over the two of them in  
Howard's office? I've got some pride.

Mike: Sherri, why don't you come out with  
me tonight. We could talk over a lot of things.

Sherri: Mike, you're a very nice guy and I  
don't want to hurt you, but I'm not interested.

Mike: Sure. *Beat.* How much time do you  
think you'll need?

Sherri: You're a sweetheart. *Size gives him a  
quick kiss on the forehead then goes  
over to Chris' desk. She pulls out a  
step stool and gets up on it looking  
through his notebooks for the right  
one.*

Let's see, this should be it. *She pulls out the  
book and looks through it.*  
Got to be before this. *She puts it back and  
pulls out another.*

Mike: *(To audience)* I'm told that back in  
the middle ages- twenty years ago or so- it  
was unusual for a scientist to have even ten  
students and postdocs helping him; that he  
worked at the bench and knew the nitty  
gritty of everything that went on in his lab.  
Not now. Not here anyway. Howard only  
knows the broad outline of what we're  
doing. How can he with a group this size?  
Between us and the people in the other labs  
there are 35 scientists working under him.

Actually, he does pretty well — considering. Of course he still puts his name on all our work and collects all the prizes. Not that I begrudge him the credit. Hell, I could never organize an empire like this. I don't have the administrative skills... or that kind of drive. So I don't know what I'll do when my fellowship is up. If I could... But the granting agencies only seem to be interested in big science these days. *(To Sherri)* Would you please hurry up?

Sherri: I'm going as fast as I can. *(Looking through book.)* Yes! This is the one. Now let's see... *She starts flipping pages back and forth. She finds what she wants and turns to the audience.* You have to understand that a scientific notebook like this is written in a sort of personalized shorthand. Even to the initiated it's hard going. Let me read you just one sentence. "Aliquoted three microliters of extract in TGE with substrate in sol B for times indicated and quenched in 10 X SSC." Sure, some of these abbreviations are pretty standard, like SSC. Anyone in the field would know that refers to a certain solution of salt and sodium citrate. But others are completely arbitrary. Take sol B. That's solution B. Now I know what that refers to

here, because I've been working with it, but Howard's written a couple of hundred papers and maybe half of them have a solution B —every one different. There's no way he could remember which one this was. What I'm saying is that it could take a couple of hours for him to decipher just one page of this. That's one of the reasons a scientist like Howard who's never at the bench has to depend so entirely on his students. *(Sympathetically)* And it's a damn shame because the man made his reputation on being able to do beautiful experimental work, not on being a fundraiser.

Mike: You forgot to tell me what to do if someone comes.

Sherri: *(Studying the book)* Hm.

Mike: I said, you forgot to tell me what to do if someone comes.

Sherri: Use your imagination. *Beat* That's funny.

Mike: What's funny?

Sherri: Wait a second.

Mike: Oh shit, here comes Jennifer.

Sherri: THAT'S funny.

Mike: I'm not being funny.

Sherri: Sure. *Enter Jennifer. Mike stands in the doorway blocking her entrance. Sherri freezes clutching the notebook to her chest.*

Mike: You called in sick. Shouldn't you be home in bed?

Jennifer: I'm feeling much better, thank you.

Mike: But it's the twenty-four hour flu. You've got to stay home. You can never tell when another attack will come.

Jennifer: Mind if I come in?

Mike: Uh... Chris isn't here.

Jennifer: So what? I work here too.

Mike: I'm sure he'll want to see you if you're in.

Jennifer: Oh?

Mike: He's down in the hot lab... with Howard... and that photographer. She wanted

to get some better pictures. The story is finally going to run.

Jennifer: Oh. The hot lab?

Mike: Yeah, the radiation safety lab.

Jennifer: I know what the hot lab is.

Mike: Of course you know what the hot lab is. Come on, let's both of us go down there. Maybe we can get our pictures in the paper too. They exit.

*Sherri falls exhausted into a chair still clutching the notebook. Beat. Finally she realizes that she better get a copy and starts Xeroxing as Howard enters and crosses to his office.*

Howard: How's it going? *He doesn't stop for an answer, but enters his office and closes the door and exits off stage. Sherri starts to return the book as Mike puts his head in the door.*

Mike: Sherri, is it okay to come in?

Sherri: *(Sherri returning the book)* Oh, Mike, I'm glad you're back, *(Mike enters with Liz)* there's something very strange going on. The

data in the notebook... (*sees Liz*) Oh, hi there.

Liz: Don't let me interrupt. What about the data in the notebook?

Sherri: Nothing important. *Crossing to where Sherri was when they entered and looking at shelf*

Liz: (*Takes down a notebook.*) You sounded pretty concerned.

Sherri: Please, Liz, this is between Mike and me.'

Liz: Looks to me like Chris might be interested, too.

Mike: It's not a detail?

Sherri: Later, Mike.

Mike: (*Incredulous*) He got the wrong answer because he cleaned up his data too much?

Liz: Cleaned up his data? What kind of euphemism is that?

Mike: Come on, Liz. We all do it. Chris just went too far...

Liz: What do you mean we all do it?

Sherri: Let's just drop this.

Liz: What's going on?

Sherri: Nothing worth talking about.

Liz: Maybe the dean would think differently.

Sherri: There's nothing to bother the dean with... I looked at one of Chris' notebooks and I think I found something wrong. I'll tell Howard about it. It's no big deal. He'll take care of it.

Liz: Darn right he will. Starts to cross to Howard's office.

Sherri: Wait a second. I've got to think about this.

Liz: What's there to think about? *Knocks on Howard's door.*

Howard: (*From oft*) Just a second.

Mike: (*In a huddle with Sherri, stagewhisper*) What is it?

Sherri: (*Stage whisper*) You know that big table in their paper? Only the controls are in

the notebook. None of the experimental results. They should have been done at the same time but there was only one entry in his index.

Mike: Run that by me again.

Sherri: The treated samples aren't in the notebook!

Mike: That's bizarre. *Howard enters and opens the door.*

Howard: Liz?

Liz: Sherri has something to tell you.

Howard: Huh? What business is that of yours? *(To audience)* Now don't get the impression that I'm generally rude or that I have an overblown view of my own importance. It's just that everything for Liz is a 'cause.' She'd reject the Declaration of Independence because Jefferson forgot to cross a 't.'

Liz: Tell him. Tell him what you saw.

Sherri: Howard, I really have to apologize.

Howard: Yes?

Liz: You have nothing to apologize for; fraud is fraud.

Sherri: I never said anything about fraud!

Howard: What's going on?

Mike: Sherri got fed up waiting for Chris to show her his notebooks.

Sherri: It's really been frustrating with nothing to do while I waited...

Howard: I don't want to hear this.'

Liz: What?

Howard: I said I don't want to hear this. You went into Chris' notebooks without his permission, right?

Howard: And you found something you think is incriminating.

*Sherri nods her head yes.*

Mike: It is incriminating.

Sherri: Mike, stay out of this.

Howard: Did Liz put you up to it? Or was it Mike?

Sherri: It was entirely my idea.

Liz: How can you not listen to what she found?

Sherri: Liz, please.

Howard: Wait a second, *(To Sherri)* Has Liz seen whatever it is that's supposed to be the problem? *(Sherri shakes her head 'no')* Does she have any other information to add on this? *(Again, 'no')* *(To Liz)* Then thank you very much, I think we can handle this without your help. *Liz turns to leave, closes the office door, but remains onstage in the lab area listening.*

Sherri: It's completely my fault. I should have waited.

Howard: At least you've gotten back a little sense.

Mike: *(To Howard)* It's nearly a month since you asked Chris to turn over his books and seven months that Sherri has been on a wild goose chase.

Howard: Maybe you haven't noticed but Chris has been working his butt off on one of the most exciting and imaginative projects to

come out of this lab. Ever. It could blow the whole field wide open. And it comes at a time when research money is getting tighter and our grant applications have been getting lower ratings. In case you've forgotten, it's results that get the grants that pay the bills. How would you like it if you were putting in that kind of effort and had to stop to hash out old data that's long since published and unquestioned?

Sherri: Wait a second. Who says it's unquestioned? I'm questioning it.

Howard: On what?

Sherri: On the fact that I can't repeat his work.

Howard: And how long have you been doing original research?

Sherri: What difference does that make?

Howard: I've been in this just a bit longer than you.

Mike: We're not talking about you. We're talking about Chris.

Sherri: Shouldn't anyone- even me- be able to reproduce what you've published?

Howard: I don't like the implication of that crack Sherri. And don't tell me you didn't intend you know what. (*i.e., sarcastic racial inferiority crack*)

Sherri: Okay, but I still can't reproduce Chris' data and from what I saw, neither could he.

Howard: I said I don't want to hear it, and I mean it! (*Softer*) Now I told Chris to get those results to you. Maybe I should have pushed him a little harder but that still doesn't give you any right to go nosing around in his notes. Whatever you think you saw, you owe Chris the decency to challenge him face to face... When he comes in we'll have this out. (*Sarcastically*) If you think you can wait that long. *Lights dim and spot up on Howard taking Alka Seltzer. (To audience)* I bet you had this picture of science being done by armies of shrivelled intellectuals led by Einsteinian generals in neat, straight lines. It's changing, huh? Sure, we like to think of ourselves as geniuses, but genius and brilliant insights are only a very small part of this business. The way you really get ahead is by spending humungous amounts of time just reading the literature and keeping up. If you're at all critical, you soon notice that a lot of details have been

overlooked in what's been published. And those missing details, trivial as they may have seemed to the researchers who did the original work, give you an idea. So you figure out an experiment that will fill in the details, convinced that the results will lead to something new... but they rarely do. Instead of answering a question, most experiments raise two new ones. And then which road do you choose? Sometimes you guess the right one —but you better be prepared to follow both. And what that means is a lot of blind alleys and one hell of a lot of time at the bench... Genius? Hell, no. It's serendipity and sweat that makes great science. *Spot out and up on Liz.*

Liz: (*To audience*) There are a lot of top scientists who'll put on a mantle of modesty and tell you they owe everything to hard work and luck. Don't believe it. It's a load of crap. Take Howard. If there were any justice in the world I'd have a group at least the size of his, instead of working by myself in a broom closet. I'm twice as smart and I work twice as hard. You think luck is the only difference between us? Let me tell you something. Back in 1965 two French geneticists got the Nobel Prize for explaining how certain genes are regulated.

One of the first papers proving their model was published in a journal called the Comptes Rendus. You know what? Every experiment in that paper is wrong. Every one! But don't misunderstand. Their model was right — it had to be... for other reasons. Oh, they eventually ironed out the problems in the Comptes Rendus paper — long after their theory had been completely accepted, bad data and all. An isolated case? Hell no. In the last five years almost a dozen papers in our leading biological journals have been retracted. And that's only the tip of the iceberg. The ones that got caught. The Comptes Rendus paper has never been retracted. That's the way a lot of people work these days; sell now, prove later. And if they make a mistake? Hey, that's no problem. They get another paper added to their bibliography for the retraction. It's a no-lose Situation... and it turns my stomach.

*Lights back up as Chris and Jennifer enter. Embarrassed, Liz exits.*

Howard: Chris; would you step in here for a minute, please?

Chris: *(He enters but leaves the door open so that Jennifer can hear the exchange.)*  
Looks serious.

Howard: Sherri.

Sherri: Chris, look, I'm sorry. I got fed up waiting for you to get around to pulling the data so I looked in your notebook. Honestly, I was only trying to get the details to reproduce your results. But from what I could see, what's in the notebook and what's in the paper don't match.

Chris: What do you mean they don't match?

Sherri: The controls are identical, but the experimental values are completely different.

Chris: That's impossible.

Sherri: I can show you Part of the data seem to have come from thin air

Chris: But... Hold it. I've got all the extracts that the experiments were based on in my deep freeze... *Jennifer looks surprised.*

Chris: Well, we could repeat everything.

Sherri: That's not the question...

Chris: Oh. Wait a second. How many notebooks did you look in?

Sherri: The one labeled with the title of your paper.

Chris: And not the one labeled “Transgenesis?”

Sherri: No, whv?

Chris: Then you’re missing half the data.

Sherri: Why’re they in different notebooks?

Chris: No good reason. That’s just the way I organized things.

Howard: Embarrassed? I was sure Chris would have a perfectly good explanation. Well?

Sherri: I guess I owe you both an apology.

Howard: I guess you do.

Sherri: But I still don’t understand why I can’t get it to work.

Howard: That, I’m afraid, will have to wait. I’ve wasted enough time on this for today. Now everyone, out.

Sherri: Hold it. Aren’t we all going to go through Chris’ notebooks?

Chris: You never give up, do you?

Mike: She’s right!

Howard: Okay. *(to Chris)* Friday?  
*(Chris nods yes.)* Fine. *Now all of you, scat. All but Howard crosses to CS as Howard closes his office door.*

Mike: *(Looking at Chris’ shelf)* Where’s that notebook marked, ‘Transgenesis?’

Chris: I’ve got it at home.

Mike: What’s it doing there?

Chris: *(Sarcastically)* That’s where I make up my results, smartass.

Jennifer: Chris, are you okay?

Chris: *(To Jennifer)* Baby, let’s get out of here. I need some fresh air.

*Lights.*

*Scene 5 Friday morning*

*Intro of some classical music. At rise Howard, Chris and Sherri in a dumb show are arguing out Chris’ results. Chris shoves some papers in Sherri’s face and she pushes them away. Jennifer is working at her*

*bench, but obviously listening intently. Mike, on the other hand, has on a Walkman and is working at the bench, conducting with his head as he works. It is what he is listening to that we are hearing. Chris again gesticulates with the papers.*

Sherri: Will you get those out of my face!  
*She pushes Chris' hand aside. Mike removes the earphones and the music suddenly stops.*

Mike: *(To audience)* Sherri wanted me to stay out. But tempers are getting a bit frayed. They've been at it for six hours now. That's more of Howard's time than I've been privileged to in the two years I've been here. Believe me, you don't want all the details. What it comes down to is that Sherri has done the experiment from scratch five separate times over the past eight months. Chris, on the other hand, a little to Howard's surprise and annoyance, only did the experiment twice before publishing. Yeah, he had more experimental points than Sherri, and the duplicates agree a little better, but on something as complicated as what they've been working on another repeat would have been nice.

Chris: Okay! I'll get the old extracts out of my freezer and do it again.

Sherri: And what if they don't work?

Chris: I don't have problems making things work.

Sherri: And organize the data a little better than this chaos, huh?

*Pointing to the papers.*

Chris: Any other complaints?

Sherri: Not until I see how you do it.

Chris: Howard, you know some other lab could be working on the new experiment and we could get thoroughly scooped if we waste a month or two on this garbage.

Sherri: It won't be wasted. If I'm right then your theory is in serious trouble.

Chris: Sherri, dear, sweet, Sherri. Look. You and I started with Howard's theory and went one step further. We said, if that model is right, then "X," "Y" and "Z" should follow. And then we said, "Oh my god!" can "Z" be right? That would be amazing! So I begged you to work with me on "Z". But no, you had to go back to "A" because you wanted to make sure you could do it. And then you got all bogged down because you

couldn't get it right. Well "Z" is working, damn it! So "A" has to be right even if my experiments that suggested it in the first place were wrong! Which they're not.

Howard: Sherri, you've got to admit that Chris is making a lot of sense.

Sherri: No he's not, damn it! I was always taught that the great theories in science are no more valid than the minutiae on which they're based. Sure I admit that "Z" is more important than "A" if it's true. But you still haven't proven it. And if my hunch is right, it isn't!  
*(Howard looks very skeptically at her. Backing down)* Besides, "Z" could be right for some totally different reason.

Howard: That's a little far fetched. Look, maybe you didn't get this in graduate school, but in medical school there's an old aphorism that goes, if you hear the sound of thundering hoofbeats, don't look for a herd of zebras. If there are two ways of explaining something- one complicated, one simple- the simple one is the right one... The theory can't be wrong. It's the way you're doing the experiment.

Sherri: *(Exhausted)* I give up, what do you want me to do?

Howard: I think it's best if you dropped

the project.

Sherri: (as much a statement of resignation as a question) And work with Chris on the new stuff?

Howard: I don't see how that's possible now.

Sherri: What?!

Howard: There has to be some kind of harmony between the two of you if you're going to collaborate.

Sherri: Have I done anything inharmonious?  
Chris?

Chris: Howard, it was Sherri's idea as much as mine.

Howard: Fine. We'll recognize that in the paper. *(To Sherri)* We'll make you a coauthor.

Sherri: And what am I supposed to be working on?

Howard: We'll find you another project.

Sherri: I don't want another project!

Howard: (To Chris) You really think the two of you could work together?

Chris: We could try.

Howard: It sounds like a thoroughly rotten idea to me.

Sherri: Why am I being excluded from this decision?

Howard: You're not being excluded. I just think it's a bad idea for the two of you to work together. *Jennifer is nodding 'yes.'*

Sherri: Like it's a bad idea for Chris to really prove his old result?

Howard: He's going to repeat it... later. He has everything he needs frozen away. But what he's doing now is important.

Chris: And you may not like it, but there still is this. *She grabs the papers from Chris and throws them aside.*

Howard: Sherri, that's unacceptable! *Surprised at her own action she runs out.*

Jennifer: Should I go after her?

Howard: Don't bother, those are just copies.

Jennifer: No, I mean she seems pretty upset.

Howard: She'll be all right. Well, I guess that's it. But Chris, next time would you please be a little more thorough before you bring stuff to me for publication?

Chris: This stuff is right! It's what we expected from your theories.

Howard: I know... but don't put off the repeats indefinitely. And make sure Sherri's around to look over your shoulder so she can learn how to get it right.

*Chris starts to argue but Howard gives him a look cutting it off*

Mike, what was it you wanted?

Mike: You said to remind you of that letter of recommendation. It's due next week. *Howard crosses towards his office then stops to think.*

Howard: Chris, how is it that you and Sherri came up with the new experiment together? Usually one person can claim credit for an idea like that.

Chris: It just happened that way. *Howard shrugs, enters his office and sits at his desk.*

Jennifer: *(To audience)* I can answer that even if Chris is too much of a gentleman. The idea came up before I was on the scene — when they were in bed together as a matter of fact. I assume in the in between times — like I say, I wasn't there. It kind of fell out as they were tossing ideas back and forth. We're all work-a-holics, what can I say?

Chris: Anyone need anything from downstairs?

Jennifer: Would you get me some fresh tetracycline from the freezer on the way back?

Chris: It won't be for a while, I've got to get some mascarpone for the tire-mi-su for tonight. *Chris exits as Jennifer goes back to work.*

Jennifer: That's okay, no hurry.

Howard: *(Mike appears at the office door and Howard waves him in.)* Mike, look, I'm happy to write these letters of recommendation for you, but you've got to make up your mind what you really want: research, industry or full time teaching. Which is it?

Mike: Research... I guess... but I looked at those grant proposals of yours that you gave me and, well, I'm not sure I could write one

of them.

Howard: Why not?

Mike: Well... because I want to do BASIC research.

Howard: That's what we're doing here

Mike: Yeah, but it's not exactly what your grant proposal says.

Howard: What do you mean?

Mike: Well...

Howard: *(To audience)* Writing a grant proposal to get research funds from one of the government agencies is really very simple. You go to any newspaper and you see which disease is on the front page. Back in the 50s it was polio. Then in the 60s and 70s Nixon launched the War on Cancer. Now of course, it's AIDS. Congressmen read the papers. They know what's popular and vote funds accordingly. So all you have to do when you write a proposal is explain how whatever it was you wanted to do in the first place is going to cure the disease of the month.

Mike: *(To audience)* And I'm shitting in my pants because I need Howard's

recommendation

Howard: *(To Mike)* Look Mike, there's nothing crooked about writing a grant proposal that implies your work will lead to an understanding or even a cure for some major disease. That's what everyone wants.

Mike: But I don't know that anything I do in basic endocrinology will help people with AIDS.

Howard: And you don't know that it won't. Twenty years ago a group at Stanford developed the methods for recombinant DNA technology. Do you know who helped fund them? The Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. Now, do you suppose they thought for one minute that what they were doing would help cure Cystic Fibrosis? Of course not! But damn it, the cystic fibrosis gene that was isolated a couple of years ago would never have been found without recombinant DNA technology.

Mike: *(To audience)* I refrain from arguing that serendipity is a lousy excuse for bullshit. *(To Howard)* Yes sir.

Howard: What's that supposed to mean?

Mike: I'd really prefer to have just a small lab where I could work by myself with maybe

a student or two and not have to worry about raising big money.

Howard: Mike, you better learn here and now that's not the way the system works. Do you want to end up like Liz? Think big or get out.

*Mike crosses to lab as Chris enters.*

Jennifer: You forgot the tetracycline.

Chris: No I didn't. Sherri's in the room with the freezers... bawling. I couldn't face it. *Lights*

Scene 6 *The following Monday.*

*Howard is in his office. Mike is at work as Jennifer passes around coffee. Enter Sherri with a limp.*

Jennifer: What happened to you?

Sherri: It's nothing. *A loud crash from off.*

Mike: What the hell was that? *Jennifer goes rushing off*

Howard: What's going on? *Jennifer runs on, grabs a lab towel and runs back out, then returns with Chris. She's*

*wrapping the towel around his bloody hand. He's in a state of shock. The others run out to help.*

What happened?

Jennifer: His hand.

Chris: They're ruined.

Howard: Here, sit down. *Howard takes Chris' hand and unwraps it. The others run up with a first aid kit. Howard cleans the wound very professionally.*

It doesn't look too deep. Can you bend your fingers? Good. Thumb?

*He bandages the hand.*

Somebody get me a scissors. *He cuts the gauze and uses the end of the point to touch each of Chris' fingers.*

Can you feel this? *Chris nods yes as Howard touches each finger.* Good. *Beat* It's pretty superficial. A couple of stitches would make the scar smaller but these butterflies will hold it. Now what's this all about?

Jennifer: Chris smashed his fist through the cabinet door.

Howard: I can see that.

Chris: My reagents.

Howard: Yeah?

Chris: Gone.

Howard. What do you mean, "gone?"

Chris: Destroyed. Everything inside my deep freeze is one stinking melted mess. Three years of work! Every clone, every reagent, every extract I've made since I've been here.

Sherri: Oh, Jesus. *Enter Liz.*

Howard: I don't understand.

Chris: What's to understand? Someone slammed into the cable and shorted the plug — the outlet is right next to the door. Everything inside thawed. A lot of stuff was stored on its side and spilled into whatever was below it.

Liz: Is everything okay in here?

*Sees Chris' hand and whistles. Mike takes her aside to explain.*

Howard: Why didn't the alarm go off when it started warming up?

Chris: Who remembers to check the

fucking battery?

Howard: Damn! The plug shorted from being banged? That's the last time I try and save money on equipment. Who the hell could have...? Those stupid, stupid janitors with their goddamn floor polishers. Wait till I find out which one's... The janitors don't work here Friday night- that was part of the last labor agreement. How come you didn't discover it before today?

Jennifer: Chris and I went camping over the weekend.

Howard: Mike? Sherri?

Sherri: I haven't been in there for nearly a week.

Mike: Not since Friday morning.

Howard: Do we know it was working then?

Mike: Huh?

Howard: I'm only trying to figure Out when it happened. Well?

Jennifer: I was in there Friday afternoon. It seemed to be okay.

Howard: Did you lock the room when you left?.

Jennifer: The door locks by itself

Howard: And none of you went in there after Jennifer? (*Sherri, Mike and Chris shake their heads 'no.'*)

Mike, why are you acting so funny?

Mike: Nothing... It's not important. (*Howard glares*) Jennifer wasn't the last person in there on Friday.

Howard: What?

Sherri: Oh, my god, that's right. I... I forgot all about it... (*Howard waits for an explanation.*) I went in there to be by myself after our conference... It's quieter there than in the ladies room.

Howard: And what shape was Chris' freezer in?

Sherri: I didn't look.

Liz: There's something very fishy going on...

Howard: What are you talking about?

Liz: I think we need an investigation.

Jennifer: Chris.

Howard: Of what!

Chris: There was almost enough material for two more papers.

Liz: First Chris' data and now this...

Jennifer: Maybe it's just as well this happened.

Howard: So?

Liz: So something's very wrong.

Chris: What?

Howard: Like what?

Jennifer: You can make a dean break.

Liz: Let's leave that to the faculty senate.

Chris: What do you mean?

Howard: Liz, were you born an asshole or did you have to work to become one?

Jennifer: You don't want to stay here now, do you? After this.

Liz.. We'll see who's an asshole. *Exit*

Chris: Why not? What else can I do?

Howard: Sherri, I want to talk to you.  
Now!

Jennifer: I'm sure Howard would give you a terrific recommendation and with all your publications you could get a top job in some bio-technology company.

*Mike shudders and exits after Liz.*

Sherri: Howard, I tried to keep Liz out...

Chris: But I want to be in academic research. Why should I change now?

*Howard turns and walks into his office.*

*Sherri follows. Howard and Sherri sit in discussion. Light in office area remains dim.*

Jennifer: It might be a good time Work as part of a team rather than mostly by yourself.

Jennifer: We better get that hand looked at.

Chris: Team?

Chris: *Yeah. He makes no sign of moving.*

Jennifer: You know, where people are constantly checking each other out. You could make a lot more money, too.

Chris: Baby, what are you getting at?

Jennifer: Nothing, sweetheart. I just thought you might be a little discouraged. That it might be a good time for a new career move. Howard's bound to be a little suspicious from now on.

Chris: Of what? You think I did this?

Jennifer: I know you couldn't destroy your own work.

Chris: Then why are you bringing up Howard and Suspicion?

Jennifer: You know it's true.

Chris: What's true?

Jennifer: Howard's going to be watching you a lot more closely.

Chris: So?

Jennifer: In case you haven't noticed I love you very much, and I'm going to find it very difficult working in a lab where

someone I love is under a cloud. And I don't think you're going to like it either.

Chris: Baby. *Embrace and exit. Lights up in office.*

Sherri: What are you getting at?

Howard: You couldn't remember that you were in the freezer room on Friday.

Sherri: I was upset.

Howard: You think the wicked fairy just waved her wand- and the freezer went boom?

Sherri: You think I did it?!

Howard: Chris was going to get out his old extracts and prove you were wrong.

Sherri: I didn't touch Chris' freezer.

Howard: Then who did?

Sherri: How should I know?

Howard: Sherri, I have thirty-five people who are dependent on me to keep this laboratory running smoothly. I make decisions on what seem to me to be the most reasonable hypotheses. When it comes to personnel I've

always prided myself in being fair and even handed. And I've been so with you. I listened when you said you couldn't reproduce Chris' results. You made a reasonable case. That's why I asked you to go over the experiments with Chris. But you couldn't wait, you had to go nosing through his books unauthorized. Okay, I can chalk that up to inexperience. Then you go off half cocked about Chris' faking his results with no evidence and run off to tell Liz. Liz, who finds a conspiracy in every first rate piece of work ever published because she didn't come up with it herself. What the hell were you thinking? I'm not finished. Friday we went over the data and even you had to admit there's no smoking gun, just two conflicting sets of data. Then you blow a gut when I suggest it wouldn't be a great idea for you to work with Chris on the new stuff. And today, three years worth of experimental materials are found destroyed because someone knocked into Chris' freezer or stumbled over the cable. And you show up limping.

Sherri: I turned my ankle, okay?

Howard: So you admit you did it!

Sherri: No, I tripped at home on a scatter rug. It didn't happen that way.

Howard: Then how did it happen?

Sherri: That's not what I meant.

Howard: Then what do you mean? Damn it, Sherri, I've had it. There's been one disturbance after another around here these last few months and they're driving me and everyone else in this lab crazy. Freezer or no freezer, you're just too damn disruptive. I can't allow this kind of thing to continue. I want you out of the lab. Now! *Lights. End of Act I.*

ActII Scenel

Scene 1 *A month later*

*Sherri's part of the lab has been completely cleared out. Chris, Mike & Jennifer are at work with Howard talking to one of them as a knock is heard at the door.*

Lawyer: Dr. Moore? May I come in?

Howard: If you're a salesman, please leave your catalog with the secretary down the hall.

Lawyer: I'm not a salesman (if *played by a woman, sales... person*). Your secretary said she thought you'd be free, but I can come back later.

Howard: That's okay. What can I do for you?

Lawyer: My name's James Williamson, I'm with Cleaver, McComb and Fredericks. I've been retained by Dr. Cheryl Russel.

Howard: So you're the joker who's been leaving all those messages. I thought I told my secretary to tell you exactly where to go.

Lawyer: She was a bit more diplomatic than that.

Howard: Then why are you here?

Lawyer: I thought you might feel a little differently if we talked.

Howard: I have nothing to say to you and I can't imagine you have anything I want to hear.

Lawyer: Unfortunately you may have to listen and under less agreeable circumstances.

Howard: I'm sure you don't mean that as a threat.

Lawyer: Believe me, I don't like these kinds of cases any more than you do...

Howard: (*Sarcastically*) But you have to earn a living.

Lawyer: Don't you?

Howard: Fair enough. But I can do you a big favor and cut the time you have to spend on this case to next to nothing. I have nothing to say. Good day.

Lawyer: That route will mean both of us end up spending a lot more time and energy than what I have to offer.

Howard: Look, I'm a busy man. I'm sorry if I'm not getting across to you, but as far as I'm concerned Sherri is a thing of the past. Her fellowship has been terminated and I have no further obligation; legal, moral or any other kind.

Lawyer: I wish I could see it that way. Unfortunately, my client feels she's been done an injustice.

Howard: Like what?

Lawyer: Well, like dismissal without cause, racial discrimination, sexual harassment, defamation of character...

Howard: What the hell are you talking

about? Chris, Mike, Jennifer did you ever hear such crap?

Lawyer: I wonder if we could talk privately?

Howard: No! I want everybody to hear this.

Lawyer: It would be a lot easier...

Howard: I've got nothing to hide.

Lawyer: No one is suggesting that you do.

Howard: But?

Lawyer: Perhaps someone else does.

Chris: Is that supposed to mean me?

Lawyer: Dr. Russel is prepared to forget everything if she can just have her fellowship reactivated under a new sponsor.

Howard: Over my dead body!

Lawyer: I'd appreciate it, if you would hear me out.

Howard: And I'd appreciate it if you'd leave... This may sound archaic to you but I'm a dinosaur. I believe in principles. I grew up

in the 50s when people talked about things like trust and love and respect for truth and even racial equality; that's why I marched in Montgomery and Selma before Sherri was born. And now she's charging me with racial discrimination? Well she can blow it out her... You know what I mean.

Lawyer: Look, we don't need to get into...

Howard: No, you look. Nothing of what I believe in makes one goddamn bit of difference. What does matter is that science is a cooperative effort and if your colleagues can't trust you then no matter how clever or creative or technically facile you are, you aren't worth a damn. Sherri betrayed that trust. She destroyed a fellow scientist's work and refuses to acknowledge it. There is no way on earth I'll be party to her waltzing into someone else's lab with the possibility of doing the same thing over again. So tell her for me that I don't give a damn for her 'injustices.' I will not be moved.

Lawyer: I hear what you're saying but put aside your prejudice for just a minute....

Howard: I just told you I have no prejudice!

Lawyer: ... that all lawyers are scoundrels? *Howard smiles.* You're right, one hundred

percent right when you say your personal beliefs aren't relevant. The question is not whether your action in dismissing my client was malicious — only if it was unjust. Obviously I'm not an expert in endocrinology, but Dr. Russel claims that she tried unsuccessfully to repeat some experiments you published under your name. She tried those experiments with your blessing. Now, how important or unimportant they are I can't judge. But when she came to you with conflicting results you did nothing. Instead of investigating, you threw her out of the lab.

Howard: That's not true. Chris and I went over his original data with her.

Lawyer: And she demonstrated Chris was wrong.

Chris: No way! You don't understand how science works.

Lawyer: According to my client you have two experiments saying one thing, while she has five saying the exact opposite. *He crosses to the shelf, looks the books over for a minute and pulls two out.*

Chris: One good experiment is worth a hundred bad ones.

Lawyer: All of your results are here in these two notebooks if I'm not mistaken? *He hands them to Chris.*

Chris: So?

Howard: We're not destroying evidence if that's what you're after.

Lawyer: Sorry to be so crude.

Howard: Get on with it.

Lawyer: I thought the rest was obvious. Dr. Russel is unable to reproduce your results. *(Turning to Chris)* Chris boasts he has extracts that can prove he's right. Suddenly those extracts are destroyed. *(Chris holds his stare.)* Dr. Russel knows she didn't damage the freezer. So who did and why?

Chris: I didn't do it!

Lawyer: I didn't say you did. My only point is that there's no compelling reason to link my client's questions about the reproducibility of the published experiments and the destruction of the freezer.

Howard: Sorry, Mr. Williamson, I disagree. Some explanation IS needed for the loss of Chris' materials. *Beat* If a patient comes

walking into a doctor's office on a hot summer's day and the patient is short of breath, complaining of severe chest pain unrelated to breathing and has a long history of heart disease, it would not be wise to spend a whole lot of time worrying about the possibility that the patient has psittacosis. A heart attack is a heart attack. It's not something obscure or esoteric. A smart person never looks for complicated solutions when a simple one will suffice. When you hear the sound of hoofbeats don't look for zebras! Do I make myself clear?

Lawyer: (To Howard) There's no chance of our meeting each other half way?

Howard: I've heard nothing to change my mind.

Lawyer: I'm really sorry.

Howard: Nice way of phrasing a threat. What's it this time?

Lawyer: A colleague of yours, who will remain unnamed, has been urging Dr. Russel to make a formal complaint to the university. So far she's refused.

Howard: Get out of here. *Lights.*

Scene 2 Some months later

*Mike is at work at the bench by himself as Sherri enters.*

Mike: Sherri! It's great to see you!

Sherri: Mike. How's it going?

Mike: I'm finally on a roll. Give me an hour and I will clear up for you the biochemical mystery of the decade. Well, not exactly the decade... maybe the year... Would you believe the week?

Sherri: Hey, Mike, that's just great! I'd love to hear it, but I'm afraid my lawyer and I are supposed to meet with Howard in about five minutes.

Mike: You didn't get the message?

Sherri: What message?

Mike: Howard's plane from Japan was grounded by a typhoon at Nanta. He won't be back for a couple of days. I'm sure he called you.

Sherri: My answering machine has been acting up... I guess I better be going.

Mike: Hey, stick around for a minute.

Please? Jennifer and Chris are out at Cold Spring Harbor for the day. I was really sorry to hear...

Sherri: Thanks. It was pretty grim when the university review committee came out 100% behind Howard. They didn't even ask him to redo the old experiment. Can you believe that? They made me look like a complete jerk.

Mike: I know. What can I say? Are you going to drop it now?

Sherri: I'm damned if I do and damned if I don't. If I drop it, I'll end up temping for a living or maybe setting up a cardboard box in Central Park. If I don't, my lawyer says I'll have to complain to the federal agencies that fund Howard in the hope that will make him agree to transfer what's left of my fellowship. But I don't think my lawyer's gotten the picture yet how stubborn Howard can be. And Liz keeps pushing me to...

Mike: Liz? You're dealing with her?

Sherri: She keeps calling me and my lawyer to egg us on... Well, she is sympathetic. That's not a dig against you, Mike. I know you tried to talk to Howard and he wouldn't listen. But you still think I might have tripped on the freezer cable and not remembered.

Mike: I never said that. I only said that I didn't believe that Chris did it. There's a big difference.

Sherri: No there isn't. If he didn't do it then I must have. No one else had a reason. (*Mike starts to protest*) Look, Mike, I happen to know that Chris' old extracts weren't working. He was borrowing reagents from Jennifer all the time because his old ones were dead.

Mike: Why didn't you say something?

Sherri: Because no one would have believed me and Jennifer wouldn't have backed me up. I figured that when Chris tried to repeat the experiments with me around he would have to admit I was right.

Mike: You mean you think Chris manufactured the whole thing? That he just made up the data?

Sherri: Of course not. His extracts were working back when he originally did the experiments. Not the way he thought... not the way he claimed — I still can't figure out how he came up with the wrong answer. But his extracts went bad with time. And he knew they were dead when he spoke to Howard. He also knew it would look bad for him after jawing about having everything frozen away if

he came up with a big fat zero while I was looking on. If that had happened, Howard would have made Chris stop the new experiment and repeat the old stuff really carefully even though he was convinced I was wrong. The old man still has some integrity. So Chris got me off his back by trashing everything. I don't think he expected Howard to fire me. He just figured that Howard would weigh the two experiments he did against my five and come up with the conclusion that repeating it could wait.

Mike: I still don't buy it.

Sherri. Why not?

Mike: Because in that case Chris would have made sure that samples of the hard-to-get new materials were secreted away in Jennifer's freezer. This is the first day he's been out of the lab in nearly three months. Jennifer brings him all his meals. He's practically living off the couch in Howard's office. I'm telling you, this is no act.

Sherri: That is bizarre... You're right, Chris isn't stupid. He would have made sure samples were saved so he wouldn't have to start from scratch. But then it makes no sense... I didn't do it!

Mike: Nobody says you did... I mean, no one but Howard. Why couldn't it just have been a... legitimate accident. All the cleaning personnel deny any involvement, but they could just be covering their ass.

Sherri: My lawyer's checked the time cards. It can't be the cleaning people. It would have to be one of the guards and they never go in there.

Mike: If they were having a party and looking for some lab alcohol? (*Sherri shakes her head 'no.'*) There's got to be some simple explanation. What's Howard's favorite expression about giraffes?

Sherri: Unicorns. Hey, when you figure out who trashed the freezer and why, let me know, huh?... *Sherri turns to leave*

Mike: Do you really have to go? Can't I buy you a cup of real coffee or something? For old time's sake? I promise not to bore you with anything you don't want to hear.

Sherri: Thanks, but you're busy.

Mike: For you, never. Please?

Sherri: Sure... Actually, there's something I'd like to get your opinion on.

Mike: Let me put this stuff away. I'm all ears.

*He starts putting the materials he's working with away.*

Sherri: How's the job hunting?

Mike: Howard got that letter off, but I haven't heard much of anything yet. And between things working in the lab for a change and the world situation...

Sherri: I know what you mean.

Mike: People around here hardly know anything is happening out there. I'm almost beginning to think I should have gone to law school.

Sherri: *(Joking)* Oh, no! *Mike has finished cleaning up.*

Mike: I'm all ears.

Sherri: Mike, I've had a lot of free time to think about a lot of things.

Mike: And you've finally realized what a great guy I am.

Sherri: Be serious. Do you think ALL of this... it's so ugly...

*Mike puts up his hand to stop her.*

Mike: How many white labs have you ever been in that had two African-american postdocs? I'm for giving Howard a little credit.

Sherri: I'd like-to think you're right.

Mike: Whoa. You asked about "all," not about "any." *Sherri looks quizzically.* Sure, your being black made it easier for Howard to take Chris' side. Especially since you were being such a trouble maker.

Sherri: Trouble maker?

Mike: Look at it from Howard's point of view. The first thing you did when you arrived was to mix up the radiation waste.

Sherri: I apologized for that. Besides, I didn't know...

Mike: Then you confused some reagents.

Sherri: That's why I took those courses.

Mike: And then you started pointing out to people that they hadn't designed their experiments as well as they might have.

Sherri: That's what you're supposed to do!

Mike: *(With a shrug)* It depends on how you do it.

Sherri: Mike, I know you've gone to establishment schools all your life, but you have heard of Uncle Tom, haven't you? *Mike smiles but doesn't respond.* Go on

Mike: There's the acid you spilled all over Chris' desk.

Sherri: I didn't do that!

Mike: You didn't? Well, Howard sure thinks you did. In any case, next, you couldn't repeat an experiment that was crucial to Howard's theories and suggested that maybe his ideas were all wrong. And to top it all off, you went into Chris' notebooks, unauthorized.

Sherri: So this is all my fault? Thanks a lot. I'll see you around.

Mike: That was Howard's side. Now let's look at it from our point of view. Not just yours and mine, but Chris' and Jennifer's and everyone else in the lab. Okay? Tell me about your thesis advisor.

Sherri: Huh?

Mike: Your thesis advisor. The person you got your PhD with.

Sherri: What does that have to do with anything? *Beat* Dr. Rogers was a real stickler for details. An absolute tyrant. But a sweet, lovely man. Not a great scientist — he barely squeaks through on getting funding every three years — but he works hard and believes in what he's doing even if it isn't au courant. Look, what does this have to do with Howard?

Mike: How would you describe your relationship with Rogers?

Sherri: Warm. Almost like a parent, but...

Mike: Exactly! You were his apprentice. That's the way science teaching is still done — by the guild system. Rogers was the master craftsman and he passed on to you his respect for, and love of the craft. I had the same experience with my thesis advisor. That's the obligation of a master. And you looked up to him. Did you ever feel that way towards Howard?

Sherri: Why should I? I didn't come here to be loved, I came here to do science. I came here because Howard is a leader in his field, a pace setter. Besides, I'm not an apprentice anymore. All I want is to be left alone to do

first class work in a first class laboratory.

Mike: The obligation of a master craftsman doesn't change when the apprentice becomes a journeyman and vice versa.

Sherri: Run that by me again.

Mike: When we teach science we make believe it's a craft — with all the collective duties and obligations that implies. But when it comes to actually doing science we become two-bit brawlers and throw all that stuff about obligation-to-craft out the window. What I'm saying is that Howard is totally corrupted by the "just let me do my work" attitude. The attitude you claim to want. That's why he feels perfectly justified — even morally superior — for what he's done to you. And that's why there's not a one of us; not you, not me, not Chris or Jennifer or any of the rest who feel a modicum of affection for Howard, much as we may respect his ability to do research.

Sherri: Mike, why is it I can never buy what you say even though you usually turn out to be right?

Mike: Funny, no one's ever called me Cassandra before. *Lights.*

Scene 3 *A few days later*

*Chris is staring at a blank x-ray film as Mike enters. Chris' notebooks have been removed from the shelf.*

Chris: Damn, damn, damn.

Mike: Where's Jennifer? I thought the two of you were coming with me to the demonstration.

Chris: Sorry Mike, I'm not going to be able to make it. I know it means a lot to you, but... *(points to blank film)* I keep coming up with nothing. The country will just have to muddle along without me.

Mike: *(To the audience, pointing at Chris)* The dedicated scientist. A major world crisis is going on and all Chris can worry about is his stupid experiment. *(In character)* Jennifer can't make it either?

Chris: I don't know where she is.

Mike: I'll give her another ten minutes.  
*Enter Howard*

Howard: *(To Chris)* You took like you're in a funk.

Chris: I've got everything I need to start up the new experiment now except one lousy clone. *(To audience)* I explain to Howard that I had no trouble getting it last time —before... But this time it's one dead end after another! *(In character)* How many times can you try to make hollandaise sauce and end up with scrambled egg yokes?

Howard: Huh? *(To audience)* There's a lot of frustration in this business. A lot! But it's worth it. Oh, I don't mean financially. I mean, well... it's hard to describe the thrill of making a scientific discovery. Maybe you can remember back to grammar school when you worked out your first algebra problem: Mary is three years older than Bill and their combined ages is 21? If you were lucky and you had a good teacher, you didn't get the rote,  $M$  minus  $B$  equals 3 and  $M$  plus  $B$  equals 21. Instead, you had to derive that abstraction yourself. And if you did, you've never forgotten it. Now try and imagine that kind of success when you know you're the first person in the entire history of the world who ever figured out Mary's and Bill's ages. *(As if responding to audience laughter)* Okay, but there's a tingling sensation at the bottom of the spine that comes from realizing that you've discovered something completely new. It only comes three or four

times in an entire career for most of us. And it's what Chris and I are both anticipating from this new experiment. You think artists are emotional? You've never seen a young scientist on a tough problem. You can get sea sick from following their highs and lows.

*(To Chris)* There must be something wrong with your preparation.

Chris: Why? I only expect...

Howard: Take it from an old timer. You'll save yourself a lot of trouble in the long run. Go back and make a new one.

Chris. That'll take another month.

*Enter Jennifer.*

Howard: Keep up the good work.

*Exits to office where he remains in thought.*

Mike: *(To Jennifer)* There you are. Coming?

Jennifer: Sure, in just a second. *(To Chris)* What was that all about?

Chris: Howard thinks I should start a new virus prep.

Jennifer: Why?

Chris: *(To audience)* I explain Howard's reasoning.

Jennifer: *(To audience)* Howard's reasoning makes no sense.

Chris: I guess he figures because I found it right off last time...

Jennifer: So? You were lucky. *(To audience)* Chris is worn out from the physical exhaustion of three months, day and night, without a break. But Howard is supposed to see the big picture. Telling Chris to start over from the beginning is crazy. Howard must be losing his touch. *(To Chris)* Want me to stay and give you a hand?

Chris: Would you mind terribly?

Jennifer: There's nothing I'd rather do.

Mike: You're not coming either?

Jennifer: Sorry, Mike.

Mike: See you later. *Exit.*

Jennifer: Sweetheart, what's really bothering you? Is it the government's

impounding your notebooks? It's going to be all right. You saw how supportive the university was. The same thing will happen in Washington. I promise. Howard's got an international reputation, they're not going to go nitpicking every little detail. Think positive. Come on, let's get started.

Chris: Thanks. *Lights*

*Scene 4 Late at night a month after Mike is at work by himself*

Jennifer: *(From off)* I'll get it. *Enter Jennifer She gets some fresh x-ray film from a cabinet and runs out.*

Chris: *(From off)* Thanks. Be back in a minute. *Reenter Jennifer Awkward silence.*

Jennifer: Mike, have you heard anything from Sherri?

Mike: I thought that name was outlawed around here.

Jennifer: How's she making out?

Mike: Just fine.

Jennifer: Mike, I feel rotten.

Mike: Why? She's fine. If you call not working a vacation.

Jennifer: She still hasn't found anything? It's six months.

Mike: In case you haven't noticed, Howard's not really pushing for her. She's looking for something in administration.

Jennifer: She's given up trying to find something in the lab? Mike nods 'yes.' With her background she shouldn't have any problem.

Mike: It's impossible to get a university job in mid—year and there's a hiring freeze in most government agencies.

Jennifer: But the biotech industry.

Mike: We're in the middle of a recession, remember?

Jennifer: What's she going to do?

Mike: I don't know.

Jennifer: Is there anything I can do?

Mike: Like what?

Jennifer: I don't know. Talk with Howard when he gets back.

Mike: What makes you think that'll do any good?

Jennifer: Nothing. Nothing at all. I just feel sorry for her. Would you tell her that?

Mike: Sure.

Jennifer: Does she know about Chris and me?

Mike: (*Nods 'yes.'*) She was sorry she couldn't make it to the engagement party. Of course she wasn't invited. (*Jennifer starts to protest.*) She understands. She's not mad at you. She's not even mad at Chris. She knows he was just doing what every hot shot young star is supposed to do— get ahead.

Jennifer: Does she know that we have a draft of the preliminary government report and it says that Chris was a little sloppy and cut a few corners? They may even ask Howard to withdraw the data in that table. You know it could cost Chris a really good professorship. And he is sorry he stonewalled...

Mike: Jennifer, don't give me that crap. Chris will be sorry if and only if it hurts his career.

And if the project he's working on turns out like he thinks, the whole thing will be forgotten. Especially by him. Howard will have it all over the front page of the New York Times — he's real good at that and Chris' only problem will be to decide whether he turns down Harvard or Stanford.

Jennifer: Mike, Chris still insists that Sherri's name be on any paper that comes out of that. He may not show it, but he really is sorry.

Mike: Give me a break! *Chris comes barging back in carrying a developed x ray film.*

Jennifer: I'd still like (to talk to Howard when he gets back.)

Chris: It worked! We've got it! The last piece of the puzzle. Now all we have to do is put them all together and see if they don't make the prettiest picture you ever saw. Mike, look at this!

Mike: *(Not getting up from his desk.)* Glad to hear it.

Chris: *(Grabbing Jennifer about the waist.)* Well, the second most beautiful thing you ever saw.

Jennifer: We're disturbing Mike.

Mike: That's okay, I was just heading home. *Exits*

Chris: What's the matter with him? *They head for the office. Lights.*

Scene 5 *Sometime later*

*Liz enters, looks around and heads towards Chris' desk. She is about to look through his newest notebook when Jennifer enters with test tubes in an ice bucket.*

Liz: Hi.

Jennifer: Can I help you with something?

Liz: No thanks, I was just looking for Howard.

Jennifer: They all went to a seminar uptown.

Liz: Oh...

Jennifer: Look, it's none of my business, but should you be in here?

Liz: Why? Am I banned from this lab, too?

Jennifer: No. It's just... well, you know.

Liz: I wanted to patch things up now that the preliminary government report is out. I guess I got a little carried away. (*Jennifer makes no response.*) What did Howard think of the story in this morning's paper?

Jennifer: You'll have to ask him.

Liz: Hey! I'm sorry. Okay? You do have to admit that this whole thing looked a little weird. I just thought Sherri was getting a raw deal.

Jennifer: You don't mind if I got ahead with these do you?

Liz: No. Please. Make believe I'm not here. *Beat* What did YOU think about the story in this morning's paper? Howard certainly came off pretty well. All those quotes from people in the field endorsing his integrity made it look like Sherri was nothing more than a trouble maker. A real nut (*Jennifer makes no response'.*) Is that what you think?

Jennifer: I've never accused Sherri of anything. And I don't think we should be talking.

Liz: I'm not a vampire.

Jennifer: You made a totally irresponsible

accusation against Chris.

Liz: I said, I apologize. (*No response.*) Howard and his friends are making out like Sherri is some kind of public menace.

Jennifer: The story in the paper was unfair, okay?

Liz: Why's that? His cronies seem to think Howard is God's gift to science.

Jennifer: I'd really appreciate it if you would leave.

Liz: Obviously you don't think Chris did anything wrong. Oh, by the way, best wishes.

Jennifer: Thanks.

Liz: You know, she can't even find a job in administration.

Jennifer: I know... it gets me pissed when I see the old boys pulling in the wagons.

Liz: So you're not quite as hard nosed as you make out.

Jennifer: I don't think everything is black and white like you do.

Liz: Do me a favor? Don't believe everything you hear about me from Howard.

Jennifer: Sherri's not crazy... that's all.

Liz: But she is a trouble maker? (*Jennifer doesn't respond.*) There are some people who've told me that there's a lot more to this story.

Jennifer: Who?

Liz: I don't reveal my sources.

Jennifer: What do your sources tell you?

Liz: That there's a lot of 'action' that takes place in Howard's office.

Jennifer: That's none of your business!

Liz: Sorry... I didn't mean to embarrass you.

Jennifer: You didn't embarrass me.

Liz: Sexual harassment is pretty wide spread these days. Bosses picking on their secretaries.

Jennifer: Howard? (*Laughing with relief*) There's nothing like that going on here, I can assure you.

Liz: Really?

Jennifer: If anyone is claiming that Howard is sexually harassing us, it's time you got some reliable sources.

Liz: Oh. *Beat* What do you and Chris think is going to happen now?

Jennifer: About what? The correction to Chris and Howard's paper is taken care of. It'll all be forgotten, especially if the new experiment he's working on pans out.

Liz: That big?

Jennifer: Bigger.

Liz: There's still the final report...

Jennifer: Forget it. They're not going to find anything.

Liz: Because there's nothing to find, or because it's too well hidden?

Jennifer: There you go again!

Liz: Well, you tell me. You say you don't think Sherri is crazy but: she's wrong about sexual harassment; she's wrong about Chris

trashing the freezer; and face it, she doesn't have much of a case for racial discrimination. So what's the story?

Jennifer: There is no story.

Liz: You're not still afraid of me, are you?

Jennifer: *(Laughing)* Afraid of you? Why should I be afraid of you?

Liz: Because I'm a trouble maker.

Jennifer: Not a very effective one. Look at you. Who would ever take anything you say seriously when you look like a car bumper that's been stickered to death?

Liz: You don't like the way I dress? Sorry.

Jennifer: Still living in the 60s, huh? What happened to your 'Free Malcolm X' and 'ERA NOW' buttons?

Liz: You wouldn't be here if we hadn't fought for women's rights.

Jennifer: I'm sure I should be very grateful.

Liz: Smart ass.

Jennifer: Can I give you some advice? If you want to be an effective trouble maker — take one issue at a time. Fraud in science, women's rights, dressing for comfort, nuclear power, not using pesticides on your lawn... you name it. They may all be wonderful causes, but no one's ever going to pay the slightest attention to you if you go after them all at once. As it is, you're nothing but a joke.

Liz: A joke, huh? You know, we all have to make choices about what we consider important. Do you really think I don't realize that it's fashionable among you ivy-league neoconservatives to dismiss all of this as 'politically correct' and therefore beneath contempt? Let me tell you something, because I've been around just a little bit longer than you. The world is nothing more than one big pendulum. Back when Johnson beat Goldwater for the presidency all the pundits were predicting the end of the Republican party, just like you young punks are saying now about the left. But you've taken us about as far to the apogee of that pendulum swing as you're going to and pretty soon people will start caring again!

Jennifer: Maybe. But right now the only thing I have to worry about is Chris and me.

Liz: And screw Sherri?

Jennifer: No, not 'and screw Sherri!'

Liz: Well it sure as hell looks like that's what you're doing!

Jennifer: That's not fair!

Liz: I didn't think you knew what that word meant!

Jennifer: Just because I wanted Chris doesn't mean I wanted anything bad to happen to her.

Liz: Well something has, and only because she questioned Chris' experiment. *Beat* She had nothing to do with the freezer... did she?

Jennifer: Why are you asking me? I don't know anything about that. It might have been an accident.

Liz: Accidents don't just happen.

Jennifer: Everything has to be a conspiracy, huh? Look, can we just drop the subject?

Liz: Sure. When are you two getting married?

Jennifer: End of July so we can

honeymoon at the Cell Biology Conference in Munich in August.

Liz: That should be nice. *(Jennifer shrugs.)* Want to tell me the rest?

Jennifer: About what?

Liz: Sherri didn't trash the freezer.

Jennifer: You don't know that!

Liz: Never mind what I know. *Lights*

Scene 6 *Sometime later. Mike is sitting at his desk in dim Light. Lights up in Howard's office, a notebook is on his desk.*

Howard: *(In a rage)* It doesn't work? *(Howard slams down his fist.)* What do you mean it doesn't work! It has to work. You've been telling me for months that it was working. You can't just come in here and say, "Sorry Forget about the most important finding of a lifetime." What the hell happened?

Chris: *(Depressed)* We guessed wrong.

Howard: Guessed wrong?! We couldn't have guessed wrong! *(Calming himself)* You must have forgotten something. We'll go over this real carefully.

Chris: Howard, I've done it five times!  
There's no question about the result.

Howard: Don't you realize how I was counting on this experiment? It was going to put the whole lab back in the forefront of things. There are thirty-five people I have to support. I need this result. I was banking on your pulling it off.

Chris: Damn it, Howard! My future was riding on it, too!

Howard: Sure. There's no chance that it's some trivial detail?

Chris: There it is.

Howard: How in heaven's name could we have been so far off?

Chris: Maybe, Sherri was right. If I was wrong about the old experiment the chances of this working were pretty small.

Howard: But all the preliminaries looked so good.

Chris: What can I say?

Howard: (*Head in hands*) Jesus, I have meeting abstracts and grant proposals all set to

go on the basis of this coming out right. God, the amount of paper work I'm going to have to redo. At least we don't have to do anything further about the old paper now that the correction is out. But it sure puts a different light on it. I told you, you should have done that experiment more than twice! Sorry. (*To audience*) You understand, it isn't my fault we wasted all this time on a wild goose chase. If I could have more time with my students, more contact, this kind of thing would never happen. But there's no way I can check every experiment that comes out of my lab. The system doesn't leave me any time for that kind of luxury. And don't tell me it's my job to fix the system. I can't do everything. *Beat* Now there's a subject for the next National Academy of Sciences meeting. Reform the system so that every senior scientist has to vouch personally for everything he publishes. That would give the old boys a few coronaries. (*To Chris*) I guess we'll have to find you a new project.

Chris: Howard, I wonder if you could do me a favor? I know you're scheduled to have a meeting with Sherri and the lawyers in a few minutes. Would you let her transfer her fellowship to another lab if that's what she wants? It would make me feel a lot better. After all, she probably was right about the old experiment.

Howard: Wait a second. You've got this all wrong. I didn't throw Sherri out of here for having conflicting results. What do you think I am? I threw her out of here on principle She destroyed materials it took you three years to accumulate You of all people should want to make sure she doesn't do that again.

Chris: It's time to forget and forgive. Besides, maybe it was an accident.

Howard: I don't believe in ac... Chris, Did you pull the plug on the freezer?

Chris: How can you even ask that? Look at me. I've been practically living in this lab for six months now. Jennifer and I postponed getting married so that I could finish this before we took time off. What kind of judge of character are you, anyway? No, I didn't pull the plug on the freezer. But drop it, damn it! It doesn't matter!

Howard: It matters to me! *Lights dim in office as Chris and Howard freeze. Lights up SR as Sherri enters. She looks terrible.*

Mike: Sherri. *(Obviously lying)*...Hey, you look terrific.

Sherri: Mike, don't ever try to become an actor, okay?

Mike: *(Offers her a chair)* Whatcha doing?

Sherri: Waiting for my lawyer. We're supposed to have a conference with Howard.

Mike: No, I know about that. I meant with your life. You didn't give me your new phone number when you moved and the phone company was no help.

Sherri: Sorry. I moved back in with my parents. But I've got a job with a drug firm lined up if everything goes as planned.

Mike: You're getting back in the lab? That's terrific!

Sherri: Reviewing toxicology reports.

Mike: Oh.

Sherri: *(Pointing to Howard's office)* Is he in? *Mike nods, yes. Beat.* Hey, look at me all wrapped up with myself. What's happening with you? How's the work going?

Mike: I should get a paper out of it. Maybe even two.

Sherri: Terrific! And the job hunting?

Mike: I've been offered an assistant professorship at Oberlin.

Sherri: Mike, that's wonderful!

Mike: It's 100 percent teaching, but that's probably best for me anyhow.

Sherri: You'll be a terrific teacher. We should have a celebration. Why aren't you jumping for joy?

Mike: After you've been around here for a while, you feel like everything but pure research is a cop-out. Anything else is a sign of failure. Oh, Sherri, I didn't mean...

Sherri: I understand. Looks like Chris has expanded into my old space. How's the big experiment going?

Mike: I don't know. He hasn't said much in the last few days... I guess it's going all right.  
*Enter Lawyer.*

Lawyer: Good morning. Shall we? *He crosses and knocks as lights come back up SL. Howard opens the door and Chris crosses nodding to Sherri.*  
*Exit Chris.*

Howard: Isn't Liz coming too?

Lawyer: We know how she irritates you.

Howard: Me? Hardly. She's too insignificant. It's a little crowded in my office...

Mike: That's okay, I was just leaving.  
*Exits.*

Howard: Now what is it you had to discuss?

Lawyer. Where's your lawyer? We can't start...

Howard: He'll be here in just a second. *(To Sherri)* By the way, you'll be pleased to hear that you were right. Chris just told me that the new experiment doesn't work, the theory is all wrong.

Sherri: What?! I guess I should be sorry...but then everything is settled?

Howard: Not quite. *(To lawyer)* You know the final government report exonerating us is out.

Lawyer: It would be completely unethical for me to say anything before your attorney is here.

Howard: *(To Sherri)* I understand, you'll

drop the court suit if I agree to write a letter of recommendation.

Lawyer: She really can't comment.

Sherri: They're a little finicky in view of all the press coverage.

Lawyer: Sherri, please.

Sherri: All I need is a letter saying that you have no reason to question my motives in initiating the suit. Nothing else is necessary — nothing about my scientific ability or background or anything like that. What do you say?

Howard. I still end up the bad guy.

Lawyer: Can we please wait?

Sherri: What do you mean?

Howard: Well, the committee found no misconduct, but we had to retract the table and there's bound to be a lot of misunderstanding.

Sherri: It wasn't a retraction, it was a correction — that's the way the journal carried it.

Howard: Everyone knows what that means.

I want it understood that I've done nothing wrong. Everything I've done, I've done on principle.

Sherri: What do you mean you've done nothing wrong?!

Lawyer: Sherri, please!

Sherri: Please what? He's ruined my life and I'm supposed to keep my mouth shut while he claims to be acting on principle? What principle?

Howard: How about trust? Or truth? So far at least you've had the decency to stick to science but your lawyer threatened to sue me for sexual harassment and racial discrimination.

Sherri: He what?

Lawyer: Just a tactic.

Sherri: Damn! There's no one you can trust! Look, Howard, I'm the one who's after truth, not you. I proved your first experiment with Chris was wrong and even though you wouldn't listen to me, the committee saw the light and made you retract. That's all I wanted. Even after you kicked me out, I never intended to sue for any kind of harassment.

All I want is the chance to work. Is that too much to ask? I won the battle and lost the war. Okay. I concede defeat. You've won. I'm broken. I'll crawl in a hole and hide. Just let me get a job so my family doesn't have to feel that all their sacrifice in putting me through school was a waste.

Howard: I'll ignore that little tear jerker. I'm not a monster and you know it! You want a letter? Sure. Only one condition. You admit to knocking out Chris' freezer.

Sherri: I didn't do it!

Howard: Like you didn't sneak into Chris' notebooks?

Sherri: I never denied that. What does it take to make you listen? God speaking to you from a burning bush?

Howard: Take it or leave it.

Lawyer: Can I interrupt for just a second? I know you all have an antipathy for the law. But what's happened to my client is a perfect example of what happens when due process is ignored. Neither the university nor the government has given her a fair hearing. Her career in research is destroyed even though you all but admitted to me that you can't

prove that she damaged the freezer. Won't you please settle for something less than a false confession?

Howard: You have your principles, I have mine. Take it or leave it.

Sherri: *(Long beat)* I can't do it. *Howard stalks out of the lab into his office.*

Lawyer: Shall we go?

Sherri: He can't do this to me!  
*Lawyer starts to lead her off. Enter Mike*

Mike: It didn't go too well, huh? *Fighting back tears, she shakes her head, no (To Lawyer)* Isn't there anything you can do for her?

Lawyer: We can go to court. But frankly we haven't got much of a case, unless someone has something devastating they haven't told us.

Mike: Like what?

Lawyer: Like proof that Chris pulled the plug on the freezer or that he never did the experiment in the first place. Or maybe that Howard knew...

Mike: Never did the experiment? Sherri, remember that day we went into Howard's office with Liz... when we came out, I asked Chris where his notebook marked "Transgenesis" was? And he said...

Sherri: He was being sarcastic.

Mike: Maybe, but maybe he was telling the truth.

Lawyer: What's going on?

Sherri: Mike's hallucinating.

Mike: Did he say it, or didn't he?

Sherri: Yes, but he didn't mean it.

Mike: Okay, but you know, there's something very funny about the data in that notebook. It isn't nearly as perfect as Chris usually gets. It's as if he wanted to make certain that no one thought he ever cleaned up his results.

Sherri: I don't believe it.

Mike: Take a look.

Sherri: No, I noticed that about the data too, but that doesn't mean he faked it.

Lawyer: It could be your only way of getting reinstated...

Sherri: It's not worth it.

Lawyer: Wait a second. Chris' notebook is still in Washington. I some friends...

*Lights up and immediately back on Howard alone at his desk, writing.*

Howard: Dear Colleague, I am writing you to request your support and to warn you that a committee of the United States Senate threatens the fundamental principle on which all scientific inquiry is based—academic freedom. The facts in the case are simple. A disgruntled postdoctoral fellow in my laboratory has brought a frivolous suit against myself and another postdoctoral fellow claiming that scientific fraud has been committed. Committees of my university and the National Institutes of Health have investigated her evidence and found nothing to support that claim although a minor discrepancy in our data was revealed and a correction has been published. In what smacks of McCarthyism, I have now been subpoenaed to appear before this committee. I'm sure your senator would appreciate your views on this impingement of academic freedom. Very truly yours, Howard J. Moore, M.D. *Lights.*

Scene 7 *Sometime later*

*Jennifer, Mike and Liz are watching a television set they've set up in the lab while Chris is working at his bench. As the lights come up we hear the pounding of a guard over crowd noise. As the noise dies:*

Senator's voice (Southern accent): Dr. Moore, you still haven't answered my question. No one is attacking academic freedom. The question has to do with science policing itself. Your research is being funded by the American people. They not only have the right but the duty to investigate if your research is being carried out accurately and completely.

Howard: (*From off*) Senator, the American people — as you put it — have not the slightest ability to judge the competence of my research. My work has been reviewed by panels of top scientists inside and outside of the government and has been judged to be thorough, accurate and complete. What we have here is not a scientific review panel but a witch hunt.

Senator's voice. Was it a witch hunt that forced you to retract a portion of your work?

Howard: (*From off*) That was one table in one of twenty papers I published this last year and the reason for the correction — not retraction — has been thoroughly explained.

Senator's voice: Well, I for one, still don't understand your explanation.

Howard: (*From off*) That's because you're out for a public lynching not a reasoned review.

Senator's voice: Dr. Moore, I didn't know that hyperbole was a part of the scientific lexicon. That doesn't require a response. Let me inform you that your research records have been handed over to the FBI and I think you may be in for a little surprise when we call you back. Now can we move on to... *Chris clicks off the TV and exits with Jennifer chasing after him.*

Mike: Jesus.

Liz: Well, well, things are looking up.  
*Lights.*

Scene 8 *Sometime later*

*Jennifer is busy setting up for a party and Chris is working at his desk. A large cake with a gooey icing is sitting on the bench along with several bottles of champagne.*

Jennifer: The decorations. I forgot the decorations. *She unfolds a hand painted banner that reads "Oberlin's Gain Is Our Loss."* Come on, sweetheart give me a hand. It's his last day. *Grudgingly Chris helps put up the sign as Mike comes walking in.*

Oh, Mike, you said you weren't going to be in until later. The surprise is ruined.

Mike: Thanks anyhow.

Jennifer: Well, why don't we start as long as you're here? The others should be along pretty soon. Chris. *She hands him a bottle of champagne to open. He pours three glasses. (To Chris) How about a toast?*

Chris: *(Thinks for a moment)* To better times ahead. *As they drink Howard enters with a very grim expression and crosses to his office.*

Howard: Chris, I want to see you immediately! *Chris and Jennifer exchange glances. His knees buckle. They grab hands and walk solemnly to Howard's office. Mike goes on drinking during the following scene. The office door is never closed.*

Jennifer: Can I come? *Howard nods her in.*

Howard: The Dean just received the FBI report. It seems the data in your notebook marked "Transgenesis" was all entered long after the paper was published. *(Jennifer gasps)* Do you have anything to say?

Chris: *(To Jennifer)* Baby, I'm sorry, I thought you knew.

Jennifer: I guessed... but I couldn't admit it.

Howard: I guess I'm the only one who didn't know. What the hell is going on? How did you think you could possibly get away with making up results?

Chris: I didn't make up the results! Not the way you seem to think anyhow. I did the experiment perfectly fair and square. Sure I had a good guess about how it should come out — how I wanted it to come out — how YOU wanted it to come out to fit your theories — but that's always the case. The first time I did the experiment I did it on a small sample and the results were perfectly clear cut There was an enormous difference between the treated and the untreated samples. I even took some of the treated samples and recovered the input material to be absolutely certain You

couldn't have asked for a cleaner piece of work. So I started writing up the results. It was the last bit of data for the paper. And like a good scientist I set out to repeat the experiment, this time on a large sample. You're not in the lab any more so you don't have any idea how much work that entails. But even before I started I had a feeling something was wrong. Like when you go to make an angel food cake and you whip up the egg whites you can tell right off if the eggs are old or if the chickens were on some kind of shitty diet because the whites don't get stiff like they're supposed to.

Howard: Get on with it.

Chris: In any case, the second time there was no difference between the treated and untreated samples. But I knew it was the experiments fault —the first results were so clear. Okay, I should have repeated it again. There were so many other things to do I couldn't be bothered. So I sort of trimmed the data pulling out the positives and dropping the negatives. It didn't strike me as such a big deal. Only much later, when Sherri started getting on my case did I begin to worry about it. By then it was too late, the paper was out. And she just wouldn't drop it. I knew that anyone who took a good look at

the data would realize what I had done. So I burned that notebook and wrote up a new one that looked a lot better I was pretty busy the night after you demanded a showdown.

Mike. *Loud belch. Enter Sherri. Mike puts his finger to his lips to indicate she should be silent.*

Howard: But...

Chris: Look, the experiment worked the first time and I felt sure our model had to be correct. It's not an excuse, but nobody really cares about the data if the theory is right. A dozen papers have been retracted in the past five years not because the data was wrong but because the theory was off. If every paper with bad data were retracted there'd be hundreds every year.

Howard: I'm speechless. I... I don't know what to say. Scientists from all over the country have flocked to our defense. Don't you understand what you've done?

Jennifer: He's sorry.

Howard: Sorry? Sorry? You think that's enough? He's turned my lab upside down. He's created chaos throughout the entire academic community. And all he can say is

he's sorry? Doesn't he know what he's done to my reputation?!

Jennifer: LEAVE HIM ALONE! Leave him alone. Don't blame it all on Chris The whole thing would have died if it weren't for you.

Howard: Me? (*Laughing*) Me? Go ahead, tell me how this is all my fault.

Jennifer: The only reason all this happened is because you...

Chris: Baby, don't.

Jennifer: You knew!?! *They squeeze hands.*

Howard: Knew what damn it!

Jennifer: You remember when Sherri accused Chris of getting the data from thin air? Before he could make up the story about the other notebook he boasted that he had all the old extracts and could prove he was right. Except he knew and I knew those old extracts were dead. I was only trying to save him embarrassment. There was no way I could get rid of the old extracts and leave the new stuff without drawing suspicion, so I pulled the plug on the freezer. I hoped that Chris and I would leave and go into biotech, but I hadn't

realized how much this new experiment meant to him. The whole thing had nothing to do with Sherri. That's the only thing I feel bad about. Who thought it would ever come to this? How was I supposed to know that you would climb up on a soapbox?

Howard: What did you expect me to do?

Jennifer: Look the other way. It wouldn't be the first time.

Howard: What are you talking about?

Jennifer: I've read your grant proposals, I've seen you shamelessly over interpret your data — our data, I've even seen the responses you've made to legitimate editorial comments on your papers. Some of the stuff you get published now is on the reputation you made twenty years ago. Anyone else submitting it would get an outright rejection. Don't give me this holier than thou crap.

Howard: Even one Liz per lab is one too many. Let me tell both of you, you don't know what sorry means. Neither one of you will ever see the inside of a lab again as long as you live if I can have anything to do about it. And I am not without influence.

Jennifer: Sweetheart, let's go. Don't say

anything. It's not that important. It never was that important. *They cross to the lab, Howard shouts after them.*

Howard: Not that important? He's made me the laughing stock of the entire scientific community — a blathering idiot. Doesn't he care about truth?

Jennifer: Do you? *Jennifer and Chris exit R. Sherri heads for Howard's office.*

Mike: *(To Sherri)* Don't. *Sherri proceeds into Howard's office.*

Sherri: I'm sorry it had to come out this way.

Howard: What are you doing here!?

Sherri: Mike's farewell party.

Howard: Oh... Well, I'm sorry it had to come out this way, too. But we'll both live. I'll get you a position someplace.

Sherri: I'm not sure I have the stomach for research anymore. Not right now, anyhow. It's what's going to happen to everyone else in this lab that bothers me.

Howard: What are you talking about? You

don't seriously think anyone is going to hold me responsible for one rotten egg?

Sherri: One rotten?... You still don't understand what's happened or what this is all about, do you?

Howard: I'm not about to listen to any self-serving lecture on hubris from a neophyte if that's what you're planning.

Sherri: I'm not planning anything. I stopped planning a long time ago. You see, my life — everything I dreamed about from high school on — is pretty much down the drain. You destroyed it. And it was very precious to me. Oh, I could get back into the lab... but that open-eyed wonder and excitement — it's not there right now and you just can't fake it. Balanced against that, your whole scientific career isn't worth a row of beans.

Howard: Come off it.

Sherri: You can't face the truth, can you? You know, there are a whole lot of people out there who feel the same way I do. And it's funny in a sick kind of way, because most of them don't know what this thing was all about and don't care. They have agendas of their own that have nothing to do with what really

happened. So even if you weren't totally responsible it wouldn't make any difference — you'd still have to pay.

Howard: You're turning this into a cheap little melodrama.

Sherri: Howard! You never proved your hypothesis!

Howard: That was Chris!

Sherri: No! You! You acted on a hunch, not fact. What Chris did with the experiment, you did with me! *They glare at one another as Howard's expression changes to recognition.*

Howard. Oh, my God. *He exits L. She exits into lab quietly closing the door behind her. Sherri gives Mike a hug.*

Sherri: Good luck, Mike. Write me. *Mike takes another drink.*

Mike: You can't stay? I understand. Hey, remember something though, okay? You don't have to drop out just because Howard screwed up. You can write your own ticket, And admit it, you love doing science. *Exit Sherri. Candles. They forgot the candles. He*

*gets an alcohol burner clumsily fills it with alcohol and lights it. Then he plunges the whole thing into the middle of the cake.*

That's beautiful.

*Lights.*

END OF PLAY

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The first fully staged workshop production opened at the Bruce Davis Theatre of St. Mary's College of Maryland, on October 15, 1992

directed by Michael Tolaydo

scenic and lighting design by David W. Fura

costume design by Elizabeth Brikowski

sound design by David M. Smith

Mike  
Sherri  
Jennifer

Chris  
Liz

Howard  
Photographer

Lawyer  
Senator's voice

Michael K. Stokes  
Deria Brown  
Heidi Lorraine Castle  
Catheryn J. Brockett  
Matthew Willmott  
Summer Jenkins Brylawski  
Marta Suarez Abril  
Steve H. Wannall  
Marta Suarez Abril  
Summer Jenkins Brylawski  
Kimberly Owens  
Scott C. McCormick

### Production Staff

Stage Manager  
Assistant Stage Manager  
Technical Director

Amy Forsberg  
Brenna T. Jones  
David W. Fura

Assistant Technical Director  
Shop Assistants

Master Electrician  
Painting Assistants

Properties Designer/Manager  
Assistant Properties Manager  
Properties Crew  
Assistant Costume Designer  
Costume Shop Manager  
Sound Operator  
Light Board Operator  
Poster Design  
Scenery Crew

Lighting Crew

Painting Crew

Costume Crew

Sean Brack  
David M. Smith  
Joseph L. Strange IV  
Thomas Nawrocki  
Tammy-Lynne Wible  
Tammy-Lynne Wible  
David M. Smith  
Erin E. Madden  
Susan F. Harrell  
Kerry Richards  
Susan F. Harrell  
Kerry Richards  
William Gillett  
David M. Smith  
Chuck Nesci  
Charlie Wertz  
Laura Getty  
Michael Stokes  
Clay Scott  
Kimberly Owens  
Marta Suarez  
Heidi Lorraine Castle  
Brenna T. Jones  
Marta Suarez  
Kerry Richards  
Heidi Castle  
Elizabeth A. Pickard  
Angela Manifold  
Bell Hughes  
Kerry Richards