

The Secret People

B. R. Fleming

THE SECRET PEOPLE





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The Secret People

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t'áá'á'í

The hawk instinctively dipped, soared, dipped again in the updrafts created by the warming of the afternoon sun. Except for the invasion of the cliff walls below by the three intruders, the day would be like any other, soaring on the streams of air, searching for food, purveying the territory, unless the Airs made their presence known.

Of all the inhabitants of the canyon that day, only the hawk knew the ways of the Airs, the spirits of the wind who ruled the canyon and who tormented the spirits of earth and water. The intruders would know soon enough, too, of the tormenting ways of the Airs. The hawk had learned from the ancient ones, who had long ago discovered the ways to tame the treachery of the Airs, had mastered the art of gliding along with the currents, dipping and shifting course in a constant dance with the tricksters. Earth and water had no such luxury and bowed to the fury of the Airs, with no protection from the gusts that carried earth hither

and thither and kept water from being at peace. Earth relaxed in the long-ago time and allowed the spirits of air and water to form the majestic canyon from its once solid presence, and now that formation had been preserved to be tested, tested by those who chose to intrude and challenge it.

The hawk's warning to advance cautiously echoed the canyon walls, falling on deaf ears. Its screeches only alerted the intruders of its existence riding the air currents above, to them a graceful, meaningless flight set against the dry afternoon, cloudless sky. Nothing to fear. No heed taken. No reason to abandon the climb. The hawk could only watch, and wait, and oversee, while the intruders continued their ascent. Instinct warned the hawk to keep its distance from the intruders, but a more heightened sense of impending menace drew the hawk to the small one, the weakest and most vulnerable of the three.

Lesley Whitney positioned herself on the rock, toyed with the lizard, intrigued by the lizard dance performed to repel attackers, to demonstrate his bravery. Instinct told the reptile that Lesley posed no threat but compelled him to engage in the enticing ritual, keeping her spellbound. Her presence there, alone with her father and her older brother, Conrad, occurred by accident anyway, and they just didn't understand her innate compulsion to explore everything around her, to delve into every crack and crevice. Her mom understood, had nurtured her curious nature, and would have encouraged her exploration had she not been taken ill at the last minute, remaining at home to rest.

Her father and brother continued their climb toward the ancient ruins carved into the canyon wall, their ultimate destination. Only the soft shale of the cliff wall delayed their persistent scaling of the slope, the same slope which contrastingly offered abundant crags and crevices that

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promised they would reach their goal. The ancient cliff dwelling lay far enough under the crest of the cliff, set back a sufficient distance into the cliff wall, to insure that very few, if any, others had made the trek up the wall to discover its secrets. That was the main motivation which had sparked Arthur Whitney to undertake the task, besides the fact that the grant money he had received necessitated that he pursue field studies. Bringing his son and daughter with him had been an afterthought, and his wife's suggestion, which he now wished had remained an afterthought, especially since his promise to take them had depended upon their mother coming along to watch over them.

Arthur wrestled the single lens reflex camera from his knapsack and documented his current position under the dwelling. The committee could always toss the documentation it felt non-essential, but Arthur knew from experience that one could never give them too much, only too little. Arthur had developed a formula for providing a carefully balanced amount and type of documentation which would assure that any committee's analysis of the materials could be accomplished in a "reasonable" time period, thus averting delays in receiving funding. However, the formula would be altered slightly on this trip with the presence of Conrad and Lesley and their desire to return with every rock, plant, or creature that they encountered. Conrad had, of course, jumped at the opportunity to accompany his dad on the trip, hoping to be the "official documenter," but Arthur had been too pressed for time to adequately prepare him for those duties and had instead allowed him use of an old camera to be his "assistant documenter," a term Conrad proudly accepted, printing it on a presenter's badge Arthur had given him to pin on his shirt. The badge had since become Conrad's constant reminder to Lesley of his "official" status.

Conrad lost no time snapping shots of everything in sight, even though his dad had explained to him from the beginning that they only needed a "few shots" of the area leading up to the cliff dwelling. Every rock, twig, cloud formation, creature that appeared became his subject matter to fill his canvas, along with the shots his father asked him to take, which so far had been very few. He had even tried to get a shot of the hawk that had been flying overhead since they had entered the canyon, but the camera had mysteriously jammed when he pressed the shutter release. His favorite shots, though, thus far, had undoubtedly been of the coyote dung strewn along the path to the cliff, for which an entire roll of film had been snapped to thoroughly establish their presence in the canyon. The closer they came to the destination, the more he determined that he would need to limit himself, since only half of the rolls of film he had been allotted remained in the camera bag, and he would need all of that for when they reached the dwelling. When they finally got there, Lesley would most likely ask to use the camera too, even though he had assured her numerous times, pointing to the badge on his shirt, that he was the official "assistant documenter." His dad would, no doubt, tell him to "let her take a few shots." Eight-year-old sisters could be extremely annoying to fourteen-year-old boys.

"Conrad!" Arthur's voice from above startled Conrad.

"Yeah, Dad!" He looked up to see his dad perched on the boulder twenty yards ahead. "What's she doing down there?"

To Conrad, anything Lesley did interfered with the task at hand and with his time with his father. And seeing her sprawled on the rocks below made him wonder why his dad had ever brought her along. Well, he did know why she was there. His mom had insisted that she go along too "to be a

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part of the adventure" and had made Conrad promise to look after her, a job he reluctantly had agreed to perform when he couldn't convince his mom that his official job would be "too time-consuming to have to worry about Lesley!"

"I don't know. Can't we just go on up?"

"You know your mother wouldn't be too happy with us if we left her behind. Go down and get her."

As much as he wanted to just go on up with his dad, he knew that he couldn't leave her behind. If she got hurt, he really would never forgive himself, and his mom would use "the stare" every time she came around him to remind him of what he had, or hadn't, done. Dad was a little more understanding about those matters, but he wouldn't be too happy either if her getting hurt kept him from exploring the cliff dwelling.

"Les!" Maybe she was too far down to hear him. Or was it the wind blowing too loud for her to hear?

"Lesley!" He'd have to go down to get her, though he had used a lot of his energy to climb as far as he had.

Conrad cautiously began his decent, avoiding as much as possible the stretches of shale which had made the climb up so awkward and so time-consuming. The route he had devised skirted the looser shale and would be the one Lesley would need to follow to safely make the climb. Why couldn't she just kept up with them?

The lizard had made its way across the rock, avoiding Lesley's nudging, and had positioned itself on the edge of the outcrop, ready to make a quick escape, if necessary. Lesley followed the tiny creature with little thought that beyond the rock lay a straight drop down the shale siding of the canyon wall, wondering instead just exactly what the lizard intended to do once it reached the edge. Again, the lizard performed the fascinating dance, seemingly pleased

with his capacity to seduce Lesley with the spectacle. With no warning, Conrad's slippery emergence from above broke the spell and caused the lizard to dart across the rock and into a crevice, leaving Lesley alone on the ledge.

"Lesley! We've been calling you. Come on! Dad's waiting for us!" Having delivered the message, Conrad wasted no time cruising back up the slope.

Lesley didn't want to end her adventure with the lizard but knew that her dad would not be too happy if they didn't make it to the ruins while it was still light. She hadn't tried to climb up the loose rock yet, keeping mainly to the many larger rocks which provided sure footing, but she would have to venture onto the loose rock if she wanted to catch up with Conrad and her dad.

"Coming." She tightened the straps on her backpack and stepped off the outcrop onto the shale and found that it wasn't as bad as she thought it would be. She just had to proceed a little more carefully to keep her footing. About ten yards ahead she noticed another outcrop and chose that as her goal to reach before Conrad had the chance to scream at her again to keep up. In true mountain goat form, he had already traveled way past that point, helping to establish a firmer footing for her, and would be watching to make sure she was following. Fourteen-year-old boys sure could be annoying to eight-year-old girls, but big brothers could somehow be reassuringly comforting.

Lesley drew a deep breathe and followed step by careful step the path Conrad had revealed, becoming increasingly confident the further she scaled the cliff wall. Her goal began to appear too effortless with her new-found confidence, and another outcrop about ten yards further looked to be more reasonable to reach. She altered her course slightly, though it veered from Conrad's, and continued toward her new objective.

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The break in the climb waiting for the kids to catch up had allowed Arthur a chance to make some notes. His thoughts had been dominated by reflection on the idea that this dwelling might be the one for which he had been searching for several years, though his investigation had so far been relegated to searching through documents and to journeying onto Hopi and Navajo reservations around the Four Corners and to Ute Mountain to listen to the stories told by the elders of the clans. Legend spoke of the time when Kokopelli, the hunchback flute-player spirit, had brought the knowledge of the art of dreaming to the Anasazi, the ancestors of the Hopi clans. This knowledge was sacred and would only be shared with the shaman of the clans, who would then share the knowledge with those they chose to retain the knowledge for future generations. The original Kiva, the ceremonial chamber of the Anasazi, where Kokopelli had emerged from the sipapu and taught the sacred art, was considered the most consecrated of all Kivas and had been kept secret to protect it. Other archaeologists had speculated that the Kiva could be found among the hundreds situated in the ruins of Canyon de Chelly or Chaco Culture or some other site in the Four Corners region, but Arthur believed that the Kiva was too important to be among the many found at those sites and that the Kiva had been part of a site from an even earlier time. For Arthur, finding this Kiva would assure him a rank of Full Professor of Archaeology and would add his name to the list of those who had made significant historical discoveries, like the Leakey's, Howard Carter, and Heinrich Schliemann.

The screeching of the hawk brought Arthur back in the moment. He returned the notebook to the knapsack, drank some of the water that had now warmed from the afternoon heat, and gathered himself to continue the climb.

The kids appeared to be making good progress toward him and could just follow him the rest of the way to the dwelling. Conrad would make sure that his sister made it up the cliff okay, and he had assured his wife that he would keep Conrad on that task.

Conrad looked ahead and saw that his dad was again moving up the cliff, which made him even more anxious to catch up to be with him when he reached the site. After all, he had been assigned the job of helping to document the findings and would need to be there to do his job. The main thing on his mind at the moment, though, was how Lesley was slowing them down, and as he glanced back to see where she was, he noticed that she had strayed from the path he had set for her to follow. Why couldn't she just do like they asked?

Lesley had moved to a section which Conrad had particularly avoided, because of the deepness of the loose shale, and was almost running up the incline toward a huge boulder encased in the cliff wall. As she approached the boulder, a gust of wind blew through the canyon, and the loose shale gave way and sent her sliding back down the slope, grasping for something to break her slide. The loose rock carried her quickly down toward the outcrop where she had begun the ascent, and she landed awkwardly and rolled over the side, the strap of her backpack catching on a crag.

Conrad gazed in horror at the sight of his sister tumbling down the slope and dangling limply over the edge of the rock ledge, fearing that at any moment the strap would give way and send her plunging down the hundred foot drop to the canyon floor below.

"Dad! Dad!" Conrad hoped his dad wasn't too far above to hear him.

Hearing his son's cries struck fear in Arthur and caused

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him to turn to see the site feared most by any parent: seeing a child in danger. He cursed himself. Damn it all! How could this have happened? He could see Lesley hanging on the rock, limp, lifeless, and felt a shudder of utter helplessness pass through him. Conrad would need to get to her and keep her from falling any further while he made his way back down the cliff.

"Can you make it down to her?!"

"Yeah!"

"Hurry!"

Conrad raced down the slope using the loose rock to his advantage now to move even faster, knowing that the strap could give way at any moment. All thoughts of his sister's slow pace and refusal to follow instructions were now replaced with the single thought of keeping her safe. After all, he had made a promise, and promises had to be kept!

As he reached the outcrop, he saw that Lesley's strap had begun to loosen and had allowed her to move lower down the rock ledge. In order to reach her, he would have to hang over the edge and would need to hold on to something to keep from falling himself. He carefully straddled the edge of the ledge, finding a crag to hold onto, and reached with his free hand to grab the backpack strap and pull Lesley up to him. As he loosened Lesley from the snag, her weight and the weight of the pack together proved too much for him to lift her up to safety. He'd have to hold onto her until his dad made it down.

Arthur had gotten about half way down the hillside and could now see Conrad hanging over the side of the ledge, one arm on the outcrop and the other holding the strap of Lesley's backpack.

"Hold on, son! I'm almost there!"

"I've got the strap, dad!"

"Just hold it! Don't try to pull her up!"

Conrad had a grip on the strap, but now the weight of the pack and Lesley was beginning to take its toll on his arm. He knew he couldn't change hands in his current position, and his arm had begun to feel like limp spaghetti.

"Hurry, dad! I'm losing her!"

A pang of terror embraced Arthur. He still had nearly thirty yards to go before he reached the outcrop, and he didn't want to plunge down the hill and injure himself in his rush to reach the kids.

Then his worst fear came to pass. Shock overcame him as he stood helplessly and watched Conrad lose his grip on the rock and plunge downward into the loose shale below, rolling and tumbling until his body slammed into a boulder near the canyon floor. Conrad lay motionless. Was he dead? Where was Lesley?

Looking back to the outcrop he noticed Lesley again hanging from the rock ledge. Conrad had managed before his fall to reattach the strap to the rock, but how long she would last there was anyone's guess. He would have to pull her up to safety and then go to check on Conrad. How was he going to explain this to his wife?

The hawk had been keeping a watchful eye on the cliff wall and knew it could no longer keep its distance, eyeing the small one dangling precariously from the side of the outcrop, and quickly began its descent along the airways. As it approached the rock, a transformation began. Legs to arms. Feet to hands. The hawk's keen eyesight could now see the strap slipping from the crag and zoomed forward, gracefully enveloping the small one in its arms, gently placing her on the rock ledge above, and gliding effortlessly back into the midday sky, resuming its canyon watch.

When Arthur reached the outcrop, to his amazement, Lesley lay on the ledge. He had fully expected to have to

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muster all of his reserve energy to pull her up to safety and wondered if the heat and the sun had made him see something different than what he thought he had seen. He glanced over the edge to see Conrad's still motionless body at the bottom of the slide. No. He hadn't imagined it. But how had Lesley managed to get herself up to the ledge?

He knelt and checked Lesley. She seemed okay. No obvious injuries. A few scratches and bruises, but otherwise looked alright. She moaned.

"Dad?"

He took some water from her canteen and patted her face, gently lifting her head to give her a drink.

"Lesley? Les? You'll be okay, Les. Don't move. I've got to get down to check on Conrad."

Lesley couldn't have moved even if she had wanted to right then. Her back felt like someone had stomped on it wearing hiking boots, and she was only slowly able to catch her breath. She opened her eyes and stared up at the open blue sky, her vision beginning to return, and wished she were back in her room at home having lunch with her cat. From now on she would leave the hiking and canyon climbing to her dad and Conrad. The pain in her back continued, and all she wanted now was to sleep. Conrad? Had she heard her dad say he was going down to check on Conrad? The screeches of the hawk interrupted her thoughts as it circled above, diving and floating on the canyon airways, and she drifted off into the darkness and safety of sleep.

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naaki

The screeching of the crane filled the air at the construction site next to the Hammer Health Sciences Building and could be heard for blocks, oftentimes terrifying students as they traversed the Columbia campus to their next class or to library research or to study group sessions or whatever. The professors in the offices and classrooms knew the construction was necessary for the new wing they needed, but they still wished that the construction could be done at night when fewer classes would be in session.

Lesley Whitney stood at the front of her students, in a classroom inside Hammer, in the middle of a lesson, mesmerized by the crane's rhythmic tune, and stared transfixed out the bay of windows into the clear blue summer sky. She'd heard that same melody before, and seemed to remember a similar blue sky associated with it, but from where and when had become lost in the torrent of

childhood memories. She and her therapist had been slowly disengaging and reassembling the bits and pieces of events that she had “forgotten” for so many years, and moments like these helped to reconstruct the deep-seated memories.

"Dr. Whitney?" The students knew their professor could be distractible, but they had never seen her as preoccupied as she had been lately.

An air horn's blast announcing the noontime break sliced through the air and broke the trance. Lesley leapt back to reality and continued the lesson as if she had never stopped, using her remote device to control the holographic image in the middle of the lecture hall. The students glanced at each other around the room, grinning at their professor's ability to recover from her digressions.

". . . and we are making great progress in this area of assessment of inherited factors, including familial aggregation, phenotype definition, linkage analysis, and gene identification."

As she spoke, the terms appeared in the hologram with links to the cell images in the display. The students took notes on their Notepads, some snapping photos and videos of the hologram, as Lesley pressed another function button on the remote and changed the representation. Images of cells and labels for the cells and an organized array of arrows and other graphics now appeared in the hologram display area.

"Our current research has led to new revelations concerning gene LGI1 and its role in forms of temporal lobe epilepsy. We are specifically interested in the link between LGI1 mutations and inheritance of autosomal dominant partial epilepsy, or ADPE."

Lesley pushed another key on the remote, separating the hologram into two images, each with different cells and labels. She used the pointer on the remote to highlight the

cell images.

"As you can see here, the T98G/vector showed high levels of phospho-ERK1/2 protein. In contrast, the T98G cells expressing LGI1 show a marked reduction in those protein levels.

These results lead us to believe that LGI1 mutations are a common cause of ADPE, most commonly with auditory features and sensory and psychic symptoms." Shutting down the hologram, Lesley moved to the front of the lecture hall to finish the session. She noticed a student with her hand raised in the back of the room. "Yes?"

"But Dr. Whitney, don't those same symptoms occur with seizures associated with brain tumors?"

"That's correct. And thus the conclusion that epilepsy can result from a myriad of causes, making our research as Epidemiologists even more complex and important. You can find the complete studies on my research web site or view the webinar. You'll need to complete the wiki on the class page before our next meeting here."

The tone to end class sounded, thrusting the students into a frenzy to shut down Notepads pack bags, gather belongings, and move on to their next class or work or mid-morning break or whatever task that next filled their schedules. Some gathered around Lesley to ask questions and make appointments, as usual, though she always reminded them that she had a Grad Assistant, Emily, who took care of those matters.

Lesley glanced at the clock and noticed it was also time for her to pack up and head to her appointment with the Dean; she waved the students away, reminding them to talk to Emily and wondered what Elliot wanted with her this time. Why couldn't they all just let her alone to do her research? Even teaching the lower level classes took valuable time away from her projects, but teaching

responsibilities would always be a part of a university position. Research had always been her first love. Teaching classes and attending time-wasting meetings for meeting's sake were not her idea of being productive, a trait she, no doubt, had learned from her parents.

Her mother, Jacqueline, had been a full Professor in French Literature at NYU when she met Arthur Whitney, a Professor of Cultural Archaeology at Columbia. The phrase "opposites attract" always came to mind when Lesley remembered the two of them together. Though they indisputably loved each other desperately, their personalities collided, as did their views on politics and religion. Jacqueline had been raised Catholic in an upper class conservative family steeped in the political atmosphere of post World War II France. Her father had served in the army under de Gaulle, and her mother had worked for the US Army as an Intelligence Analyst.

Arthur's family life couldn't have been more opposite. His father had served in the U. S. Navy as a Commander of a PT boat and his mother had worked in a psychiatric unit that treated soldiers suffering from "exhaustion", which later became known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. With an agnostic father and a mother raised in a half-Jewish household, religion took a back seat to politics and academia.

Strolling across the campus to the Rosenfield Building and her meeting with Elliot reminded Lesley of the times when Arthur would take her to the Columbia campus with him or to the dig sites he used to train his students. She would always be right there in the thick of it, grabbing tools for people, using the sifters, tagging the artifacts. Playing

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with other kids her age had never been high on her list of fun things to do. She loved being a part of the excitement of unearthing a clay pot or digging through a refuse pit. She had often heard Arthur tell his students that curiosity was one of the most important qualities a scientist could possess, and she had her share and more.

Entering the Mailman School of Public Health offices, Lesley felt the knot begin to tighten in her stomach as it always did at the antiseptic feel of the building. Elliot's office took up a sizeable chunk of the area allotted to the Dean's Offices in the building, but that included room for several office staff and Elliot's Administrative Assistant, Marta. Thankfully, Lesley didn't spend much time in the offices and had her own space in one of the older buildings in a remote section of the campus, where she relished the solitude, usually, and wasn't as likely to be inundated with students seeking answers to questions. Her grad students, especially Emily, could usually answer any questions the students had, and grad students had their own office spaces in the Hammer Building in the center of the campus.

"Hi, Dr. Whitney." Marta always referred to the professors by their titles, in case students were close by.

Lesley smiled and gave a little wave. "Is he in?"

"Be back in a jiff. Go on in."

Lesley settled into one of the chairs at a conference table and put her feet in the chair next to her. The Dean of the school being a friend of the family had its advantages. Elliot and Arthur had met while doing their grad work at the university and had written several papers together. Though they often disagreed on matters of policy, they had remained close friends and were known to share many a brew at the local pubs.

Outside, the constant, rhythmical hum of the construction equipment relaxed Lesley and lulled her into a

daydream state. Her body eased into the contours of the chair, feeling lighter and lighter until total relaxation overcame her. She drifted off into a luxurious restfulness, a much needed relief from the tension she'd been experiencing lately. All of the seemingly thousands of memos, calendar events, notations, emails, phone messages, conversations raced through her head at light speed and slowly dissolved into a colorless, formless void. At the center of the void, an infinitesimal light began to emerge, spreading quickly in all directions, accompanied by a slowly, increasingly audible low frequency hum. Lesley struggled to free herself from the daydream but only became more entrenched the harder she struggled. The light now became flashes of piercingly brilliant streams flowing from all directions to all directions, traversing the black void, the low drone following in amplified bursts.

Panic seized Lesley. She was conscious enough to know what was happening but unable to move or to take control of the spectacle. The streams of light increased to the point that only minute specs of black remained interspersed on the screen in her mind. The low-frequency bursts had erupted into a constant roar like a freight train circling in her head. She had never felt such a complete loss of control before, yet, she could feel the presence of some force, some energy source manipulating the episode, thrusting her into the throes of a paradoxically sensual, almost ecstatic, transcendence, drawing her closer to the center of the void. Then the presence of another outside force took hold of her, drawing her back.

“Les. Les!”

She could faintly hear her name interspersed in the raucous tumult.

“Les!” Elliot sat in the chair next to Lesley nudging her and calling her name, not wanting to be too aggressive and

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possibly interfere with what might be a partial psychic seizure. Pulling her away too abruptly could adversely affect her complete recovery from the episode or cause a secondary, complex seizure. He grabbed an ophthalmoscope from his desk drawer and examined Lesley's eyes. The pupils reacted to the light, so he could assume no external chemical interference..

As Lesley's vision slowly returned, she barely made out a blurred face as she reacted with a soft hiss of a word. Was it really . . .

“Dad?”

“It's Elliot, Les.”

She groggily stirred.

He helped her sit up. “Are you okay?”

“I think so.” Trying to sit up, she fell back into the chair.

“Just relax.”

Lesley couldn't do anything but relax.

“How long have you had this fever?” Elliot could feel the heat emanating from Lesley even from several feet away.

“I don't have a fever. At least I haven't had one.” Lesley could now sit up on her own without feeling dizzy.

“What happened?” Elliot wet a towel with some bottled water and held it against Lesley's forehead.

“I don't know. I was just sitting here relaxing, waiting for you, and then drifted off into . . .”

“Have you been having any other symptoms lately, like --”

“Elliot, I'm okay, really.”

“You called me “Dad” when you were coming around.”

Lesley didn't remember anything beyond just coming into Elliot's office and sitting in the chair. But to call out for

“Dad”? Several years had passed since she last saw Arthur, and that meeting had not been under the best of circumstances.

“Have you seen him since the funeral?”

“No. And I don’t want to talk about that.”

“Look, Les, I know the past couple of years you’ve been pouring yourself into your work in an effort to not think about the accident. I haven’t wanted to say anything, until now.”

“Is that why you wanted to see me today?” Lesley could feel herself withdrawing into her shell like a crab escaping a predator.

“No, that’s not why. But it’s time you faced the fact that Conrad and your mother are gone, and nothing you can do will bring them back. And their accident wasn’t anything you could have prevented. Lesley, this is starting to affect you physically, and it’s not going to get any better until you do something about it.”

Lesley didn’t want to hear where Elliot was going with this. She removed the towel from her forehead and sat up. “Why did you want to see me?”

“I really had two reasons. And I don’t think you’re going to like either one of them.”

“If this is one of those good news/bad news things, just give me the bad first.”

“No, it’s nothing like that. I just wanted to talk to you about work mainly.”

“Work has been just fine.” Lesley couldn’t think of any problems she was having with her teaching duties or research projects.

“I know that. It’s not the quality of your work. You’re a fabulous teacher, one of our best, and your research has been very productive. No, it’s the amount of work. You’re overloading yourself. This episode today is just the

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beginning of your body's reaction to it. I want to see you cut back, maybe even take a sabbatical. I can't even remember the last time you asked for a day off."

"Elliot, I can't just drop my research--"

"I'm not asking Lesley. I'm telling you, not just as the dean of the division, but as your Godfather and your friend and someone who cares for you very much. And for yourself. I want you to take some time off."

Lesley's mind raced now with all of the loose ends she would have to tie up if Elliot was really serious about making her take time off from her work.

"We only have a few weeks left of this quarter. You've trained your Grad Assistants very well. They'll be able to handle the classes for you."

"But the research on LGI1 needs to continue." Lesley felt desperation creeping in.

"LGI1 can wait a few weeks. We're not shutting it down. We'll give your team some time to begin writing up your findings and preparing your paper for the ACE meeting this summer."

"But, I --." Lesley couldn't handle the fact that she wouldn't be busy, immersed in an activity.

"Good. That's settled." Elliot wasn't going to hear any more pleas from Lesley. "Now for the next item. And I know you may not want to hear this."

Lesley guessed that it had to be better than what she had just heard.

"Arthur is in town. I figured that you didn't know."

And she didn't really care to know.

"He's guest lecturing at NYU tomorrow evening." Elliot let that sink in.

"Have you talked to him?" Lesley wasn't sure if she was ready for a discussion about Arthur yet.

"No. I just thought it might be time for you and him to