

Bettina's Bet  
by  
L. Timmel Duchamp

Kwame skimmed the summaries in his mail queue. Mayra Bauer, he saw, had sent text with her HP communication. He wondered: More documents for the project? Eagerly he played out her communication first.

A miniature of Mayra, short, erect and round, characteristically swathed in cerise, sprang up before him. The date and time of the recording— 02/12/23:20:03:22— overlay the red-stockinged ankles and indigo-slipped feet. “Miles!” she said, her voice cracking with enthusiasm. “I did a search of the archives of the State of Michigan, using Javitts’ name as a keyword. It turned up several dozen cases in which Javitts submitted psychological evaluations for convicted prisoners awaiting sentencing. Listen, Miles, I think I’ve found exactly what we need. I’ve been through about half of them and so far have found the origins of Javitts’ theory of the evolution of human mental categories present in three. The early theorizing is crude— tellingly so. I simply can’t imagine any reasonable person failing to see the flaws in the general theory once they got a look at the precursor versions.”

Mayra paused, drew a deep breath, and folded her arms over the large pillowy shelf of her breasts; she grinned ruefully. “Yes, Miles, I know, I know. I can almost hear your despairing, cynical response. It may turn out to be not only as eye-opening as later revelations about certain of Freud’s earlier cases, but as non-threatening to the supremacy of the theory as those cases were to the supremacy of Freudian theory. So Freud mutilated a patient’s nose in order to cure her emotional (and therefore sexual) problems (as well as to prove his and his partner’s theory)? So Freud assumed that teenaged girls were sick if they weren’t sexually responsive whenever any older male pressed himself on them? All right, so the various revelations never touched the real partisans. I admit it, most people can tolerate an infinite amount of cognitive dissonance. But we’ve got to try, Miles. If we don’t stop these maniacs it won’t be long before they start using the Javitts Scale of Natural Selection and Normal Adaptation to render people like you and me into genetic dead-ends. Just remember: once Congress passes the bill requiring sterilization for all adults not scoring within the so-called normal parameters of the Javitts Scale, the Supreme Court will be our last hope. We’ve got to get on this, man.”

The tiny eyes of Mayra’s image peered intently at him, as though looking directly into his face. “When you’ve read the documents I’m sending with this letter, you’ll see why I’m so full of new fight. They’re Javitts’ first recorded mention of genetic deficiencies vis-à-vis psychological reactions to cyber-constructs. Oh, and there’s a reference to a more elaborate report, of which these documents provide only a summary. The data base apparently doesn’t have it, who knows why. I’ll have to see if I can locate a hardcopy, supposing such a thing is still extant. The other two I’ve so far found, which I’ll send you when I’ve finished going through the rest of the cases, actually offer more developed arguments sketching a

precursor theory of Javitts' Categories of Human Mental Evolution. I believe they'll help us deduce the logic— if one can call it that— that informs the theory as a whole. Still, I think when you've read it you'll agree that this first case, Miles, is our baby. It's the beginning. It's the knot from which Javitts started knitting the empire, and therefore the knot which once undone will let us unravel the whole damned mess with a few sharp, quick tugs on the thread." The cerise-draped arms lifted in a two-fisted gesture of victory. "Empires can be unraveled, Miles. And this one is no exception. Never doubt it."

The projection cut out, and Kwame was left, as usual, feeling slightly flattened at the sudden absence of the drama and exuberance Mayra's messages always conveyed. She'll be grand, promoting the book, he thought as he reached for his text reader. But she's going to have to learn to leave her knitting metaphors out of it, since few of the people we need to convince have a clue as to what knitting even is. . .

File #09242286.PSA

**Pre-Sentencing Advisory in re: Inmate #F7742286**

Contents:

- A. Transcript of selected monologues made by the inmate during post-conviction, pre-sentencing confinement, providing a general overview of the inmate's psychological state.
- B. Summary of pre-sentencing advice to the Court by A.N. Javitts, M.D.

A. Transcript of Selected Monologues of Inmate #F7742286

1.

[07.28.63/11:24:06]

. . . and so came to a clearing in a wood, a wood with trees barren of leaves, their branches limning the starkness of winter, except that the sun was beating down all golden warmth and love, like Indian Summer, and the leaves thick on the ground were two feet deep, and calling me. The smell of them, dry and crackling— it was only in my imagination, I know, there wasn't anything for me to smell, yeah, but somehow I did smell them, that dry autumn fragrance totally unlike the vegetable, rotting smells of summer. . . *clean*, the autumn smell is, not fresh but *clean*, a clearing-away. Anyway, I stood there purely wallowing in the smell I put where none actually was, and then a spurt of joy took me, I mean it took me over, like a burst of manic, electric energy, made me fling myself into the deep cushion of leaves and immerse myself, like it was the warm salt water of a gulf. And I rolled in those leaves, giggling, soft, soft— to myself. (It was one of the good kind of things,

one of the few that's allowed, you know? Well *I* know. I know it's good.) So— just for that little bit of time— I tapped into that certain spirit inside, you know, that spark that starts to die as you get older and tired and set into synch with a cynical mean world. And it felt so fine, to find out it was still there. I'd been thinking lately that I'd lost it totally.

Then, while I was rolling around letting the leaves brush my face and crackle in my hair (the hair that I had in that setting, which was long, yeah, long and straight, as I don't have these days in real-space), a pair of boots came and planted themselves in my face (catching my eye, so to speak), which sobered me fast, and made me look up and scramble to my feet to brace for something nasty. Only when I saw it wasn't a man, but a woman, young and okay-looking, not the snob or dweeb type, the panic drained out of me. Why? I've been thinking about it, and I believe it was just simple reflex. I mean, I know that it could have been a man looking like a woman. For kicks. To take me by surprise or whatever. And I know that women can be ugly mean customers, too. But we're talking reflex here. How I reacted before I had time to get around to thinking.

So then the next thing I know, I'm rolling around in the leaves with this woman I've never met, and we're playing like puppies or preschoolers, that kind of thing. No meanness, just the pleasure of tapping into that same spirit. It's probably stupid of me, but thinking about it now almost makes me wonder if things couldn't really be different. If Jamie's way isn't the only one.

Of course the next thing I know, the Ugly Grating Voice of Authority pulls an interrupt. "Recreation period is over." And I'm back in the world of the four gray sponge walls, and my body's folded into a Half-Lotus, and the leaves and sun are a memory without reality. And somehow I feel worse than I did before recreation period. (Though yeah, there's no way to know that I wouldn't have felt worse if I'd just gone on sitting there in interminable gray solitude.)

But that's jail for you.

2.

**[08.10.63/20:04:49]**

Dr. Javitts says I'm not supposed to talk like to her, but really just to myself. That my talking to her doesn't mean shit, because the real problem is with me. And that I'm not facing up to it. That the point of isolation isn't just to keep me from contaminating other inmates, but so that I'll come to understand how and where I went wrong. (And even that I did, which she says I don't yet admit.) (Well I think it's a slander to say I'm "bent." You can't dispute the legal code, and going by what it says, I know I did wrong— but if anyone's "bent" it's Jamie. Which, I might add, I've never held against him, either.)

So. I'm not supposed to be pretending I'm having a conversation with another person. But that's hard. Really hard. Because it makes me feel like a crazy person, sitting here talking to myself, out loud, even if it is what the doc says I'm supposed to be doing. I

don't see why if I have to talk out loud I can't either pretend I'm talking to a second person, or else do this talking in cyberspace, where I could at least sit down and look at some reasonable version of myself (not any of the ones the jail's stuck me with, that would be too, too gross) while I'm talking. . . And then it would be like talking in a mirror, only better. (Obviously I don't look half as cool in the flesh as any cyberspace version Jamie ever gave me to use.)

Jamie. Yeah. It always comes back to him. He's the one who's been legally wronged. "The injured party," Dr. Javitts calls him. "Explore the reasons you did it. And not by just repeating the story you always tell when asked," Dr. Javitts said in our last session. But the whole thing is totally obvious, I said to Javitts. What's there to explore?

Start with your relations before you assaulted him, Dr. Javitts said. So alright. I'll do that. I'll tell the story of our sick, twisted, perverse relationship.

Hey. I've just had a *fascinating* thought. I used to think constantly about my relationship with Jamie. How we met. Our early meetings. But I haven't thought about any of it since the day I proved him wrong about himself. I mean, I used to be *obsessed* with all the teeniest tiniest details. But though I spend all my time alone, between these four dirty gray boring drab walls, none of it ever crosses my mind now.

It's like the whole thing's settled, isn't it. Like I had a catharsis. Yeah. Now I ask you, how can losing an obsession be unhealthy? Twisted? Bent?

But all right. To start from the top. I met Jamie the day he came to check his old man into the nursing home where I work. Or rather, worked. I was on what we call the "taxi patrol"— which means I was detailed to pick up and deliver patients from point A to point B. In this case, the patient was Jamie's father, point A was Admitting, and point B was Five Northeast. Like most of the patients on Five, this old dude wasn't all that old. Not decrepit, not crippled, not even short of breath. But going by the book, not only did Jamie have to input all the data into the admitting terminal for his father, but I had to give the dude a ride to Five Northeast. Later, Jamie told me that his father didn't have an active medical problem— but that a slew of docs had said that heart disease was eventually going to get him. As everyone knows, the younger you are when you check yourself into a womb, the longer you'll live, because your cells won't have to be battling free radicals and all that. Which was enough for Jamie's old man, I guess. Still, according to Jamie, his father was seriously into downhill skiing and mountain hiking and swimming twenty laps every day in his company's gym. Can you figure it? I know I can't. But I didn't say this to Jamie at first. (I mean, it was creepy to think about, and embarrassing to bring up. And so up until the time Jamie made an issue of it, I just kind of kept my thoughts on the subject to myself.)

So anyway, I deliver Jamie's old man to Five Northeast, and then go on to the next pickup the dispatcher assigns me. Since I do maybe thirty or so of these jobs in one shift, I wasn't thinking of that particular one at all when, waiting for the bus at the stop across from the nursing home, Jamie pulls up in this really sleek sweet car and offers me a lift. I didn't recognize him at first and refused. But then when he refreshed my memory, I decided what the hell (though considering he was still a relative stranger, I know I was an

idiot for getting into his car anyway)... So we went to this really neat place for coffee and ended up sitting there talking for hours, swapping our life stories. After that we had a second meeting, where he talked me into a cyberspace date... and the rest, as they say, was history.

I guess you could say the conflict was there from Go. I mean, him helping his old man to put himself away so he could live (if you can call it that) the rest of his life in cyberspace, which I found super-gross. And him telling me I'm a moron for working a real-space job that's "demeaning" and low-paying. (And did it matter, when I pointed out that somebody had to work in child-care centers and nursing homes and hospitals? Of course not! He said that those jobs should all just go either to robots or to what he called the "intellectually and socially dysfunctional"! As though such jobs could be held by just anybody!) (Though maybe he's right, maybe the taxi patrol and other nursing-home jobs could be done by robots, but considering how most patients at Green Haven aren't like those on Five Northeast, it sounds cruel and inhuman to me.)

Enough of this shit. My voice is getting hoarse, and the food hatch is beeping.

### 3.

**[08.23.63/06:05:27]**

Have I ever been this lonely in all the lonely desert that's been my life? For answer, consider my desperation every time the jail's system shoves me into its cyberspace with the announcement by the Ugly Grating Voice of Authority of "visiting period." Visiting period means, at best, a meeting with my mother. And always, always, always, the terror and hope (both at the same time) that maybe Jamie will be surprising me.

The visiting period I just finished sitting through netted me zero visitors. It's cruel, the way the jail yanks all inmates into cyberspace whether they have visitors or not. Each time you face the disappointment of zero visitors, you're also stuck sitting between a cyberspace set of four gray walls. The first time this happened, I kept hoping it meant that the connection had been delayed, not that I was being kept there as a regular, general thing. But jail never has individualized reasons for anything that happens in it, only rules that are generally applied whether appropriate or not.

You wouldn't think it would make any difference. (But it does, the way so many totally trivial things do when you're in jail.) I guess it's the sense of rejection that gets pounded into you when you're sitting there, waiting, waiting, just waiting to be released back into your real-space cell. And though there's no reason to, I always shiver, as though there's a chill in my bones, gripping my heart. And I've been thinking about this, too, and maybe the best way to put it into words, would be to say it's a figurative cold that makes itself psychosomatically real. Yeah. Psychosomatically real.

My mother says that visiting periods are always scheduled somewhere between eleven at night and seven in the morning. When they fall at three a.m. during the work week, she

just can't make it. She's a plumber, she needs her sleep. And Dad— well, like, I know I won't be hearing from him. He's "disowned" me. He says I'm no daughter of his. Strange, when it was always Dad who was my good bud (when he was in the mood) and Mom who just couldn't stop herself from constantly finding fault with me.

"Your crime is not a gender issue," Dr. Javitts says. (Which is exactly what the prosecutor and judge said during the trial, too.) I never claimed it was (even if my lawyer tried to argue that). I've always said it was a question of my proving Jamie wrong. And the fact that Jamie hasn't visited me proves I succeeded in doing it, too. If he was right about what he thought he felt and believed, then he'd see me and say he has no problem with what I did. But the fact that he hasn't shown up to do that only proves my point.

And so that's my real sin: having been right, having done what I did under such circumstances. Because if Jamie didn't care, then what I did to him wouldn't really have been wrong, would it?

4.

**[09.07.63/13:46:19]**

Dr. Javitts says I'm not working hard enough to find the answers to the questions. She also says that only when I do will I then be "fit" to be sentenced, which is the only way out of this "limbo" (as Mom calls it). Yeah. The question of why I did it (and "to win the bet" isn't the "correct" answer), and also of what my real feelings towards men and sex are. (Can you believe it? When everyone agrees it's not a "gender issue"? Talk about contradictions! I'd like to know just how I'm supposed to come up with some kind of theory about how I have bent ideas about men and sex without it being some kind of gender thing!)

Look. I never had trouble with men. I never went out that much, true. But that's only because I'm not what you'd call a cool piece of action. Not because I wasn't interested. (Even if I do like to read about romance and sex more than plod through the real thing, which, let's admit it, is usually pretty boring.) Let's just say that until Jamie took an interest in me I never really managed more than ten or twenty one-night-stands I had with pickups.

Actually, I kind of assumed that that was the kind of move Jamie was making when he pulled up that day at the bus stop. A slick dude like him, smelling of money and class. Not the kind of character who's going to be interested in much more than a fast fuck or two. So I was flattered, you know, really totally flattered when he expressed some more general interest in me.

Not that I know why, even now!

But hey. My throat's dry. And drinking too much water makes me have to piss, and I hate using the fucking vacuum-cleaner-like contraption that passes for a toilet in this place. So I think I'll just stop now for while.

God this place sucks.

## 5.

[09.11.63/02:44:03]

So— I'm practically bouncing off the walls with energy, thanks to a visit from Clea. The doc's always talking about maybe starting me on antidepressants, but the fact is that if they'd let me access books and allowed more visits, there wouldn't be any fucking "depression" to "be concerned for." Yeah. But since for a lifelong bookworm like me reading is fun, they won't let me do it. (They don't even give you the usual word cues in their damned cyberspace, because reading them— instead of hearing the nauseating Ugly Grating Voice of Authority— would be a pleasure, however fleeting.) (Basically, they don't want you to feel like a human being. "You've put yourself outside society and culture, Bettina," Dr. Javitts says. "Therefore the amenities of society must be denied you, until you come to terms with exactly how and why and even that you made yourself an outlaw.") So I'm not a human being. A *social* human being. Right.

Actually, I was shocked when I saw Clea. I mean, after she gave away all our most private conversations in court, I like thought she fucking hated me. But it turns out that it was she who thought I must hate her. (Even though it was my lawyer, not the prosecutor, who asked her to do the talking.) It was only when Mom told her that I didn't hold anything against her that she decided that maybe she would visit, to try to patch up what the legal system had tried to destroy. The reason it took her so long, though, was that the idiot computer screening applications for jail visits kept tagging her as a "media opportunist" out to get the juicy details firsthand, for future exploitation. (Which of course is a no-no, until after sentencing.) Finally, though, she got cleared. (Now that's loyalty: she kept trying and trying, even though a big part of her was sure I was hating her guts and would get ugly with her if she did get access.)

But if it shocked me to see Clea, it shocked her *severely* to see the bod the jail makes me use for visiting period. (Mom described it to me during her second visit, when I made her.) It's bald, for one thing (like I was when they first brought me here and shaved my head). And it's basically just a mess of lumpiness in a gray sack that's exactly like the one they make me wear in real-space.

But except for that first awkward minute or two, it was totally cool. She'd just taken in a really neat cyberspace installation— endlessly elaborate, the kind of thing you could spend hours poking around in— on the subject of male bodies. Needless to say, one thing led to another, I mean her description of some of the neat insights into social perceptions and presentations of male bodies by various of the media kind of naturally led into the old shared fantasies about Jamie, and from there to... well, real giggles, you know? I mean, though what I did was serious, there's also this sense of hysteria you just can't avoid when you start thinking about it all from a certain angle...

Clea said it was two in the morning. Which means it must now be close to three. It feels a little like late afternoon to me, that's how fucked-up jail is. Bedtime, or nap, who cares. I'm getting good at sleeping with the light on (though according to Dr. Javitts, that's what's messing up my menstrual cycle, which she says is normal for most women who have a "prolonged" pre-sentencing period). (Ha-ha, funny joke, isn't it, Doc?)

## 6.

[09.14.63/15:20:19]

(Sensors monitoring the inmate's pulse, respiration and blood pressure were set off at 03:19, and visual inspection revealed she was masturbating. The following monologue ensued after a First Warning had been delivered orally to the inmate to desist.) Damn you, damn you, I didn't even notice what I was doing! I mean, I was just sitting here thinking. And then this siren goes off and the Ugly Grating Voice of Authority threatens me with full-time incarceration in a cyberspace cell where masturbation is physically impossible! Is that fair, if I don't happen to notice I'm doing it? But nothing's fair here. Jesus. You say I can't have any more visits from Clea because I "blew" the one you did let me have. Blew it! Well fuck it! You never told me that the whole *point* was to talk "seriously" about Jamie and my crime. How was I supposed to know that?

Don't you people realize you are *killing* me? Do you think I can't feel the bones sticking out all over on my body now? It's like it's not my body anymore! I've *never* been bony, not even when I was a kid! But this fucking diet you've got me on— grub so boring anyone not kept in a condition of near-starvation wouldn't touch the shit— god knows how many pounds I've dropped. Which is really fucking ironic, you know. Jamie's not here to see it. Won't ever see it. The bodies he had me use in cyberspace— man, they were all anorexic. Walking skeletons, really. I mean, except for his disgust with flesh, I'd never want to look like that. Sure, I always wanted to be thinner. But *that* thin? A woman'd have to be on her deathbed to get that kind of thin, and then what would be the point?

And Jamie looking like one of those dudes in the cunt-throbbers I used to blow my budget on. Long, flowing black hair— "raven," like they say in those books. Silky. Down to his fucking asshole. Oh honey. A real beauty. And the hands— graceful, with long bony fingers, about six rings on each hand, and sexy leather bracelets up and down both forearms. Mmm-hmm. The messages he sent out, by the way he walked, and stood. And his eyes— hot molten brown lava, as they say. And a heartbreakingly beautiful jaw. I just couldn't get enough looking at him— only he didn't care about that, didn't care to give me a chance to look at him in real-space, no, all the dude wanted was to be in cyberspace all the time. And there came then that unforgettable Saturday afternoon, which happened after we'd been doing cyberspace kind of things a few times, by which time I'd started to get big-time major horny for him, that he went just about foaming-at-the-mouth crazy when I said I wanted us to take our clothes off. He couldn't stand the thought of seeing me naked, he said, it would be a super gross-out. Yeah. I wanted the floor to open and swallow me up. I wanted to disappear. Like being in a room full of people where everyone's staring at you and when you happen to catch a look at yourself in the mirror you see there's snot drooling out of your nose. Only like, this is me, this is my body, how I am. So it wasn't like I could just wipe it away, was it. And so of course I started rushing the hell out of there as fast as I could, when he grabs me and says that none of that's important. ("That" being... what? Sex? Real-space presence? My body? Or his feelings about my body?) Betts, Betts, he says, don't you understand it's your psyche that I'm into. Your



body doesn't matter. *My* body doesn't matter. We can have any kind of bodies we want in cyberspace. Right. I guess I should have known, because of the cyberspace bodies he'd so far been giving me. (Not that I saw that much of them— just enough to see that most parts of them, at least, were skeletal, and never had any tits to speak of, which at that point hadn't yet meant all that much, though it made me a little uneasy, since it so clearly wasn't anything like the real me.)

So now I'm bony in real-space, too. Who knows, maybe I'll look like a skeleton by the time you people are through with me. I can feel only stubble where my hair used to be. Haven't had a period since the trial. And I know it must be past time. My breasts haven't even gotten swollen— and I'm always always horny the week before my bod starts loading fluid for the next period. I wasn't masturbating because I'm especially horny, you know. I mean, I've hardly had any kind of physical feelings but hunger and insomnia in this place at all since I've gotten here. But shit, there's nothing else to do here. My mind was on auto-pilot. And my fingers just did what comes natural, out of boredom. Because this place isn't natural, you know. It isn't healthy. I mean, human beings aren't meant to be always physically alone. Sitting in a gray space talking to themselves, man.

Is anybody listening? Spying on me, yeah. But *listening*? No. Of course not. I'm just fucking talking to myself, as usual. I mean, it doesn't matter what I say until I say the magic words. So all right. Tell me what they are and I'll say them! Just tell me. I can't take this. It's killing me. I know I'm going to die if I keep on this way. I just know it. I can feel it in my belly. It's like a worm inside me, eating me out from the inside. Or rather, worms. Yeah, a whole nest of them. Writhing, their slimy tentacles burrowing in and eating me out. And nothing to stop them! Oh god. There's nothing there! Nothing there! Nothing there! Did you inject them in me, is that what you did? And maybe you're just waiting to see how long it takes them to kill me. An experiment! I'm an experiment! Is that a fair trade, I ask you? *IS ANYBODY LISTENING??????* (*The inmate at this point grew incoherent. After ten minutes of sustained hysteria, the monitor triggered the release of a dose of tranquilizer from the medication capsule implanted in her thigh at the time of processing, and the inmate subsided into twilight sleep. — A.N.J.*)

## 7.

[09.22.63/12:14:59]

So. I have to like start fresh. I've been fucking up major, here. And in the words of Dr. Javitts, if I don't get my head together soon, I'll be in deep, deep shit. (Not that she'll say exactly what that would work out to be.) I feel as though I'm in deep shit already. Not just being in isolation, and awaiting sentencing for my felony conviction, but in the sense that I'm probably just about ready to fall apart. Mentally. That's what makes me nervous about all this talking out loud to myself. I mean, I'm supposed to do it to sort of think out loud, to work out what has gone wrong with me. And so as not to inhibit the process, I'm

just supposed to do it whenever I feel as though I might be going to think seriously about it. But all of this “free-speaking” makes me wonder. Whether I’m not turning into a real loonie-toon. Because I catch myself talking to myself even when I didn’t mean to be doing it. Now in here, maybe that passes for sanity. (Like the “compulsive behavior” they only a few hours ago zapped my frontal cerebral cortex to cure—the doc said that when they did a visual inspection of me and discovered my blowing-on-my-fingers thing, that it was no big deal, and that they could have eliminated that right when it got started, if only I’d let her know about it.) But if they ever let me go back to seeing other people in real-space, that kind of thing would have to go straight off. I mean, can you imagine, finding myself babbling away when there are live people around? They might think I have one of those contagious mental viruses. And wouldn’t that be a load.

But the thing is, to be serious. Which isn’t that big a deal for me, since people have been telling me since Day One to lighten up. So here’s serious topic number one, that Javitts said to try working on. My last rec period. So okay, it was the scene in the forest with the leaves. But this time I didn’t get any kind of kick from it at all. Didn’t smell anything. And everything looked sort of like a holographic animation, Saturday morning kind of stuff. So I don’t roll in the leaves. But this woman shows up anyway. Which pisses me off. And so I tell her to get the fuck out of my space. I mean, it’s my rec period, I got the right to decide. But she doesn’t take no for an answer. And so I jump her and knock her into the leaves and kick her (and she takes it, doesn’t make a move to defend herself, even though she has those mean-looking boots on). Of course all the time I’m punching and kicking her I’m thinking about how she’s just a computer projection being bounced into my optic cortex from a satellite orbiting the earth, and how she doesn’t feel a thing, even if there’s a personality somewhere behind the image. And that if there is a personality, it’s of someone who works for the jail. And so then I really go at her, yelling and screaming my head off, calling her every shit-name I can think of. (Most of them Jamie’s favorites.) And the damned Voice doesn’t interrupt, and the woman doesn’t disappear and so finally I get tired and walk away. And what happens, but that I come on her again! And so I know I’m not going to get rid of her by kicking her face in. And the whole thing just makes me frustrated and so I start to cry. And she comes and puts her arms around me and this just makes me more upset instead of giving me any kind of good feeling. But then, because I’m thinking about how it’s a jail production and is probably meant as some kind of lesson (instead of genuine recreation), I say I’m sorry. And then the Ugly Grating Voice of Authority releases me, and I’m back between the four gray sponge walls.

I suppose the whole thing comes down to resentment. Resentment at being so alone. Resentment at only getting these cyber-contacts, which are just totally phony. I mean, I wouldn’t have tried to beat up a stranger in real-space. It would just never cross my mind. And I never feel that antagonistic towards anyone. Not even Jamie. When I cut him with the laser scalpel, I wasn’t feeling rage, the way I did during the last rec period at having that image invading my space. The only time I ever felt rage at Jamie was when we played in his cyberspaces. But that was all make-believe, too—in the sense that he wasn’t really hurting me physically—not giving me any real physical pain. The sensory connections in

the standard consumer cyberprograms aren't made for pain reception. And most of the sensory connections are pretty crude, anyway, except for detailed sensation in the hands. And, of course, the genitals— though there the sensations don't really correspond to the way they'd work out in real-space (which they mostly do for the hands), but just trigger horniness and orgasms. And so all the while I was pissed off at Jamie for the things he was doing to me I'd be either getting super-horny or having orgasms.

Yeah, I know, I probably should talk about that. I mean, according to Jamie, that should have made up for everything that I didn't like. The fact that I didn't *feel* any physical pain, the fact that I did experience orgasms, made him impatient of my not wanting to play his games. But so what if I came? It didn't make me feel good. And afterwards I'd hardly remember coming, just all the other shit he and I were doing and saying at the time. And of course I couldn't talk to him about it. Like explain why I didn't like it. I mean, he had to have known why I didn't want to do it. Except that he kept saying I was a prude, and a little simpleminded, to want to do it in cyberspace the way people do it in real-space, when the whole point of cyberspace is to make a different kind of reality than the one we already have, not to pretend that it's the same.

And me, I was always the kind of kid who couldn't back down on a dare. I hated to be thought a coward. I guess it was just plain luck that until I met Jamie no one had ever really dared me to do anything self-destructive or criminal.

8.

[09.23.63/17:22:36]

Okay. So now I'm supposed to think about why I didn't just walk away from Jamie and his games. Why I kept on with it even though doing that kind of shit made me feel bad. Well, it's simple. As I said when Dr. Javitts raised the question in our last session, I had such a thing for him that I couldn't even think of dropping him. And second, I'm not a coward, and I knew that if I'd walked away some of the things Jamie was always hinting around at might stick with my head— hey, I know they would. I know that much about myself. And I'd always regret it. I mean here was the one time I had real contact with someone that cool. I mean, he was like out of a book or a soap! Everything about him, not just his looks. And he was basically a decent guy, even if his sexual tastes were bent. And then, when he made the bet with me— how could I have walked away from that?

Dr. Javitts says the bet isn't the "intrinsic reason" for my "crime." It's only an "alibi," she says (though I thought alibis were supposed to be stories that excused you from committing crimes, which isn't at all what I'm claiming, I never claimed I didn't cut Jamie). I'm supposed to explore the bet, to get beyond the superficial meaning covering over its real meaning.

So. We had this bet, because I wanted to spend time with Jamie in real-space (which he never would do after our first couple of meetings), and he wanted to get me internally

connected, so that I wouldn't have to come over to his place and get myself wired up each time. And the bet was that he could get me to see that cyberspace has more to offer than real-space— that it'd be better for me to practically live in it, the way he and his old man do. And if he won, he'd pay for internal connection, and even help me find a decent cyberspace job. My side of the bet was that I could get him to admit there was plenty worth doing in real-space. It seemed pretty obvious to me, that though he had that dinky little apartment, in fact he liked the amenities of real-space— I mean, considering the car he owned (which was previously his old man's), and the places he liked to go to eat (where he sometimes took me), I really thought I had a chance at winning. And the payoff if I won would be our having sex in real-space. (I bet the prosecutor just hated that part of it— that Jamie wouldn't have to spend a dime on me if I won, while it'd cost him a pile if he won.)

Of course it embarrassed me in court. I mean, people would think nothing if the forfeiture on my part would be sex, instead of vice versa. But Clea understood— even if she did tend to think that what Jamie wanted would be just super. But what I've tried to explain, is that Jamie wasn't entirely himself in cyberspace. It was like he would sometimes become someone else, depending on the body-image he was using at the time. It was roleplaying, I guess. Which would have been all right, except that the more time we spent in cyberspace, the more that became all there was— roleplaying. To me, that's not life. That's not living. That's not engaging with reality. (Which is what I finally told Jamie. And it was right after I told him that that he proposed the bet.) So it was like he was a Jekyll-Hyde— only with lots of variations on the Hyde side. And the Jekyll part almost never accessible.

But about the bet— it did change things. It added a certain edge. The edge had been there before— for me, anyway, but always covert. Because I didn't want a real fight with him. And also because every time I was about to call it quits, he'd turned sweet (just as if he knew I was about at the limits of what I would take). Would spend some time with me in real-space, give me a driving lesson in his car, take me out to dinner, that kind of thing. And then he'd be perfect (except that he felt no attraction to me in real-space, which I could always sense, and would make me feel uneasy and worthless and lonely but still not that bad, because he was being so sweet and totally focused on me). Ooh, the way he could look at me— never taking his eyes off my face, like there was nothing else in the universe but him and me. . . nobody else has ever looked at me that way. Nobody. And I know no one ever will again, either. . .

*(Subject broke off speaking here, and sobbed and mumbled incoherently for roughly twenty-eight minutes.— A.N.J.)*

## 9.

[09.25.63/01:14:38]

Yeah. So today's subject of unilateral conversation concerns what Dr. Javitts calls an evasion of the facts. Namely, why I keep insisting that I cut Jamie to win the bet, when I could have, say, trashed his car or his apartment instead. Which, though it could have gotten him super-pissed-off at me, wouldn't have done lasting, permanent damage to him personally. Or, as the doc summarized the question, why didn't I try something a little less drastic.

Now this, I have to admit, is a fair question. Because looking at the situation superficially, it would seem obvious that I could have gotten him by damaging mere property. And I admit that it has always been my honest belief that Jamie is attached to his car. So right away, when we made the bet, I mentioned it to him, casually. Sort of as a joke. Well, he said, the car was valuable to him for (a) the cash it would someday bring him, which he could then "invest" in cyberspace, and (b) as a comfortable convenience for getting around as long as he was still "outside" (which is how he liked to refer to real-space). Ultimately, he said, the car would mean nothing to him once he had taken his Dad's route. So then, after he loaded all this shit on me (with a ridiculous smirk, purely disdainful, you know?), he said that if I took a good look around the apartment I'd see there was almost nothing in it. (Which was true— and it was a dinky place, besides— being basically about the size of the space I had in my parents apartment.) Almost everything he made, he said, went on cyberspace programs, utilities, facilities and games. And, he said, that even though he was young and in good health, he was already seriously considering going his Dad's route once he could feel totally confident that he could make it psychologically and security-wise "inside" (which is how he usually referred to cyberspace). I thought about his Dad lying in one of those creepy wombs on Five Northeast and asked him what he meant, about making it. He said that (a) people permanently inside needed someone outside who they could trust to take care of any real-space situation that might come up that they couldn't handle themselves from inside, and that (b) some people freaked out when they tried to live inside for more than twelve out of the twenty-four hours of each day. His Dad had gone through months and months of testing and conditioning before he'd checked himself in to Green Haven.

Anyway, if I'd trashed his car, he would have claimed to be pissed at my depriving him of the cash it was worth and still not lost the bet. The thing with cutting him was that he was always claiming that only the parts of his body useful to him in cyberspace— his brain, his other vital organs that kept him alive, and whatever he could use in real-space to make his cyberspace life better— mattered. And so you see that really didn't leave much in his life that he couldn't claim served to advance his cyberspace existence, did it.

## 10.

[09.29.63/16:38:09]

God, I'm really totally bummed out now. I feel like my head's being chopped and shredded for creaming in one of those yucky yellow white sauces Dad sometimes makes when he's "in the mood" to cook. If they pull many more numbers like the one I just had to go through, there's not going to be anything left to be sentenced (supposing the judge ever gets around to doing it).

Okay. So I get the warning from the Ugly Grating Voice of Authority that in five minutes I'll be dumped into visiting period. So all right. I get myself situated, in the usual Half-Lotus, the way you're supposed to when you're going to be doing cyberspace for over a couple of minutes and under an hour. And then sure enough, the jail's system pulls me into the hall they make you wait in during visiting period. But what it turns out is happening is that they're messing with my head. Even though I'm back in my real-space cell now, I'm still shaking from the whole experience. Yeah. So after about half a minute or so (though who knows, I have trouble figuring the passing of time even in real-space, which is more natural to my body rhythms than time passing in cyberspace), the little stick-figure light over the door into the visiting area changes from red to green. And I naively think, hey, I gotta visitor. So I go nonchalantly in, knowing it can't be anybody but Mom, I put on my friendly grateful smile, the reformed loving daughter and all that— until I see who my visitor is. Oh man. I almost shat in my pants when I saw that image. It was one of Jamie's faves. And the first thing I think is that he must be pissed as hell at me. And the second thing I think is how shitty I must look, with the horror image the jail's stuck me with. But then I glance down at what I can see of my cyberbod and discover that it isn't any of the ones the jail ever gives me, but one of the skeleton-girls Jamie used to have me use! Pretty freaky, right? Yeah. Well then while I'm just standing there staring down at the bony knees of this cyberchick bod, Jamie says, "Hey, Betts. How's it going? Must get boring in this place. So how about a game of Killer Sex in the Maze?"

By this point everything that's happened between us is running through my head, and so I say, "You're not mad at me, Jamie? Tell me the truth, are you upset at what I did? I'm really and truly sorry if you are. Or is it like you claimed about all real-space shit? And it didn't matter at all?"

Now I know this sounds callous. But though I wanted him to know I was sorry, I also wanted to know whether I'd won the bet or not.

But Jamie just takes my hand and pulls me through a third door (one that's never there when Mom visits), right into his Maze cyberspace. Which is this big old spooky mansion, lit only by occasional flickering candles, honeycombed with hundreds of hallways and staircases dripping with cobwebs that brush against your skin. (There've been times I could have sworn they were sticky, though I suppose it was purely a psychological response on my part.) So then Jamie tells me to run, that he's got a laser scalpel and a welding torch he's going to get me with if/when he catches me, and suddenly I'm alone, and running, and getting harrowed by booby-traps and rabid, slaving animals on the loose in

the house. And of course the whole time I'm lost, and wondering if I'll ever find the safe well-lit room with the cozy fire and telephone— I supposedly having misplaced my own—for calling the police. (I never have found the place, not in all the dozens of times I've played the game. For all I know it could be something Jamie told me was in the space, but never really was. Just to motivate me for play.)

And of course I run and run and run. And though I don't lose my breath or get a stitch in my side, still I get worn out and tired with the running and fear. Maybe there's no physical effort involved to explain it. But the point is, I guess, it's really the strain of too much adrenalized nervous energy. Yeah. So my heartburn comes back, really bad. And my heart's pounding like mad, because I don't want Jamie to get me. I mean, I really really don't. More than I could seriously ever put into words. I know, the horror of it is all in my head. But still, I have this terrible dread. It makes me jump and scream whenever I think he's found me.

It takes a long time. But Jamie does eventually get me, and I scream and sob and beg for mercy before he even starts on me. And he just laughs with one of those horror-movie giggles, and puts me through all that scary humiliating shit, just like he always does. And still I plead with him, I beg, and he keeps on laughing at me, and tells me I like it. (And then makes me have an orgasm, just to prove it.) But this time, I'm so worked up that I start screaming at him, about how I cut him, how I really cut his real body lying totally defenseless in real-space while his conscious self was in cyberspace, and how I'm glad I did it and how I'd do it again if I had the chance, that it was what he wanted anyway, wasn't it, ha ha ha.

And then, Zap. Without any warning I get dumped back into real-space by the jail's system. And here I am, still shaking from the terror of it, and even while I'm talking about it I keep hearing my voice screaming at him that I'm not sorry, that I'm glad, and that I'm especially glad that I chopped his thing into little pieces after I cut it off his body, so that it could never be fixed, never be replaced, never be his again.

I know the jail was just playing games with my head, and that it probably wasn't really Jamie behind that cyberbod of his. Still. It felt exactly like him, and the laugh was the same and the words and all that. So it might as well have been him, right? Whatever. It's at times like this that I guess I do hate that bastard's guts. Not enough to kill him, no. But just to show him how seriously fucking screwed-up and wrong he is. You know?

#### B. Summary of Pre-Sentencing Advice to the Court:

As is revealed from the final monologue included in this file, a re-enactment of a typical interaction between the inmate, Bettina Raymonde Smith-Weber, and her victim, the inmate feels no genuine remorse for her crime, despite her protestations at other times to the contrary. Considering the serious nature of the felony she committed, and the circumstances in which she committed it, it is my strong recommendation that she be permanently confined in maximum security as an incorrigible, unpredictable threat to society.

It is the general rule that psychiatric consultants recommend permanent maximum-security incarceration for only those inmates deemed sociopathic. While the inmate did not test out as sociopathic in the initial standardized screening, it is my hypothesis, supported by the results of custom-designed tests, that this inmate suffers from a disease of the mind hitherto unmanifested in the human organism. While the inmate's personal history reveals no long-standing identifiable tendency to violence, and while she shows a perfect intellectual facility for distinguishing between cyberspace settings and real-space reality, she nevertheless has manifested (and continues to manifest) an inability to distinguish between them psychologically. Apparently, what happens in the course of cyberspace games is as real to her as anything occurring in real-space, and accordingly informs her attitudes and behavior in real-space. Hence, she used a laser scalpel in real-space, in imitation of its use in a cyberspace game, supposedly (as she constantly claims) to help her win the real-space "game" she characterizes as having been a bet made between her and her victim.

It is my hypothesis that this as yet nameless disease is a new form of sociopathy, occasioned by an inability to process, *psychologically*, movement between cyberspace settings and real-space. The disease may or may not be due to an organic (possibly even genetic) inefficiency, that has only now, with the advent of the quotidian use of cyberspace, appeared. (See file #09242286.PSE for a greater elaboration of this diagnosis and for access to the custom-designed tests mentioned above.) Clearly, further research on the subject is warranted, pursuant both to childhood screening (such as we use to detect ordinary sociopathy), as well as to possible mitigating treatments or even a cure.

(signed) Arthur Norman Javitts, M.D.  
10 October, 2063

To: Mayra Bauer

From: Miles Kwame

Re: The Case of Bettina Smith-Weber

Mayra, I know you disdain object-relation constructs because of their genealogical origins, but this case practically throws them in one's face. Consider: Bettina relates to Jamie as a part-object, not a whole person. She becomes violently enraged by his lack of engagement with *her*. Her major problems with cyberspace are (1) her belief that where Jamie's concerned she's a substitutable cipher, less real to him than the roles and cyberbodies he assigns to her; and (2) her inability in that context to achieve identification with Jamie (as would be usual in a real-space sadomasochistic relationship, the likely analog of their cyberspace relationship), perhaps because of the very totality of the role as it exists in the cyberspace games they play. Bettina focuses on Jamie's failure to engage sexually with her—a metaphor, if you will, for all that she wants from him. He doesn't—in Kleinian terms—satisfy, rather he represents the "bad breast" (fully in line with her relating to him



as a split-object). Ironically, Jamie plays to this symbolism by assigning her anorectic cyberbodies, which in the logic of one arrested in the oral phase is an underscoring of his constitution as the “bad breast.” So what Bettina does is attack, literally, the very metonym of her dissatisfaction, his penis. She knows very well she’s not doing it to win the bet, but to punish him— and show him that she’s dissatisfied with him— in the one sphere in which she has some control— the physical. In cyberspace *he* makes the rules, assigns the roles and so on.

Now, about Javitts’ manipulation and analyses of her case: obviously we can’t say to what extent he understood and intentionally aggravated her neurosis. Certainly he must have intended to stimulate the rage that provoked her assault. (If Javitts had been a genuine healer he would have been working to bring her to the stage of mourning, so that she could see and accept Jamie— and all of her other others— as a whole, independent person.) In all her monologues she never once manifested confusion between real-space and cyberspace. The issue, as he develops it from this case forward, is what he calls “emotional processing” of movement between the two states. This is the key to his theory, and the basis of the Javitts scale. Is that, in short, what we see in this case?

While Bettina’s emotional reactions to the Maze game are powerful— a mixture of fear, humiliation and rage— when talking about it afterwards, at least, she does not perceive the game itself as reality, but rather as a scene in which certain sorts of interactions take place. What she does do— and what Javitts seems to take for a failure to “emotionally process” the movement between the two states— is take the emotions she experiences during the game *personally*— *they* are real to her, and in her mind define her relationship to Jamie (since playing cyberspace games with her pretty much defines the parameters of his interest). The analog in real-space would be sexual games— without, let’s stipulate, physical pain or harm. Would we define a person who reacted in such a context as Bettina did as failing to emotionally process the movement from play to reality? Clearly it was the humiliation and dissatisfaction that were real to Bettina; the medium in which the interaction was experienced was virtually insignificant. One wonders whether any behavior and response someone in Bettina’s situation might have made to Jamie’s demands would have been regarded as healthy. From my own point of view the only “healthy” response would have been to leave the relationship, since the only means of satisfaction for either of them would be to the other’s dissatisfaction.

Certainly one can talk about different psychical responses to cyberspace. People like Jamie feel an oceanic oneness in achieving freedom from what they perceive as the grossness of physicality, and perceive unlimited possibilities for emotional satisfaction in cyberspace. Others do not. The Javitts School has never managed to isolate genetic material it can hold responsible for aversive responses to cyberspace immersion. Yet by arguing from the premise that the human species is— and must— evolve beyond its “animal” nature, anyone admitting to a strong attachment to the physical is marked as manifesting the phenotype of a gene or genes not yet identified. I don’t think anyone would deny that the wild demographic fluctuations and resulting geopolitical upheavals that have come about as a result of the differences in fertility of cyberspace-inhabiting populations

from non-cyberspace-inhabiting populations are a cause for concern. Establishing incentives for cyberspace-inhabiting persons to reproduce are one thing; sterilizing those who do not ever intend to live full-time in cyberspace is quite another. I have no doubt that the hardest core of Congressional support for such a measure can be found among those who know that many other countries— and major institutions like the IMF and World Bank— are likely to imitate congressional passage of the measure. (Certain countries have for years been working to rid themselves of indigenous populations and ethnic minorities; with new justification as well as logistical support and economic assistance in carrying out this new policy, they might finally succeed.)

Let me be frank, Mayra. I don't think this or the other early Javitts cases will do much to impress the general public. The argument is too subtle, and Bettina's crime too violent and suggestive of strong emotional aberration. (Ordinary citizens will identify with Jamie and be aghast at the idea of an intimate friend taking advantage of that particular vulnerability.) Rather I think we must rely on the strength of the argument for preserving *natural* selection, and genetic diversity. Many of the proponents of the sterilization bill are arguing for changing the definition of "human" to the exclusion of all that is physically brutal and violent. Bettina would serve them well as an image of the regressive, animal human mired in criminal instincts. Your idea was excellent, and your ingenuity in unearthing these cases admirable. But please, let's do ourselves a favor, and drop it.

Best regards,

Miles

**The Office of the Deputy Attorney General of the United States  
Washington, D.C.  
15 March, 2123**

To: Rodney R. Wilson, U.S. Attorney, San Francisco, CA

Re: Operation New Order

Dear Roy:

The file that accompanies this letter contains a report from the Bureau as well as transcripts of their extensive surveillance on Miles Kwame and Mayra Bauer, both professors at UC-Berkeley, and co-conspirators in activities in violation of several felony-class federal statutes. Their plot began as an effort to destroy the reputation of Arthur Javitts (which, since he is deceased, would not in itself be illegal, of course), in an attempt to discredit the Javitts Scale of Natural Selection and Normal Adaptation and all

of its proponents as well (an undertaking so ludicrous as to suggest a serious mental deficit in both of them). After Congress passed the bill mandating sterilization of the maladapted, however, their efforts expanded into the formation of an organization to aid maladapted in avoiding detection, and failing that, sterilization. (N.B. the electronic transfer of funds from the Frente Febe Elizabeth Velasquez, a known front organization for the Coalition for Violent Revolution now operating widely throughout the hemisphere.)

Your instructions are, therefore, to have Kwame and Bauer detained and charged as suggested in the concluding section of the Bureau report. If you think any additional charges should be brought, or if you think the Bureau's evaluation is mistaken and any or all of the charges should be dropped, this can be done in the usual way, after the suspects have been arrested (and after due consultation, of course, with my office).

I strongly advise that after you have detained them you put them through not only the Javitts scale, but the Memphis Inventory as well. I've skimmed enough of the file myself to conclude that though they both seem to share a common notion of reality, it is not one any normal American could recognize as sane, rational, or healthy. (In which case a trial would be a needless expense and thus difficult to defend to the taxpayers, should the case garner any public attention at all.) Moreover, both of them spend only the requisite amount of time in cyberspace for fulfilling their professional obligations; and both are ethnic-food junkies (as a result of which Bauer is grossly overweight, as Kwame would be, were he not addicted to the endorphin highs produced by excessive amounts of running).

Your appearance on the *Sharon Jessamy Cyberconference* was first rate. The AG himself happened to catch some of it while cyberconference cruising and was immensely pleased at the quality of your presence.

Cordially,

Bernard P. Behrens  
Deputy Attorney General of the United States

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"Bettina's Bet" first appeared in *Asimov's Science Fiction*, January 1996.  
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If you enjoyed reading this story, you'd probably also enjoy L. Timmel Duchamp's *The Red Rose Rages (Bleeding)*, which you can purchase online from [Aquaduct Press](#) or [University Bookstore](#).