

BYRON TIMOTHY

The Superspecies Two Sample
Chapter

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Discovery and Denial

The blood samples from White River had been sent to Dr. Grimm's office for an initial analysis prior to the official EPA analysis, mainly because his laboratory was stocked with the most state-of-the-art equipment currently available. With it, the test could be performed in less than half the time and had the added advantage of letting them know ahead of time what the results would be prior to becoming a matter of federal record. The crusty analyst had been expecting the samples for three days and was growing a bit impatient because of his desire to avoid any association with the project; concerned the samples had been intercepted in transit by the government which would've tipped them off to his involvement.

"What took them so long?" he complained the instant they arrived in a plain brown package. Not given to gratuitous complaining as a rule but the nature of this project carried many potential outcomes for him, all of them unpleasant, and he was angry at Morey for involving him in the first place. He placed the samples noisily into caddy trays and began preparing the necessary equipment to run the experiments.

Sitting in his own private laboratory with a series of computer-generated models he began testing them to determine if any of the genetic blueprints in the database matched the DNA configurations contained in the samples from White River. If there were any positive matches the bears were considered bona fide carriers of the gene even though there remained some ambiguity due to a considerable number of models to look over and agreement not yet unanimous regarding specific gene sequences or “signatures” for *Superspecies* status.

Grimm glanced out the window at the expansive campus courtyard below bathed in fading light from the afternoon sun across winding spires into shadowy neo-gothic arches where eager faces emerged from finished classes. Intricately conceived windows splayed out in parallel rows outside offices and classrooms along various levels of the main campus building, opposite his vantage point. As director of biology he was responsible for coordinating all the major and minor affairs of the department as well as resolving many of its more “irresolvable” problems. Department funding being the main one (at least by administration’s standards) but, from his perspective, was simply a never-ending effort and doubtless the most difficult and unpleasant part of the job. The director of administration was forever sending him correspondence to cultivate relationships with such-and-such a wealthy personage: parties interested in sponsoring the university’s various departments. Of course there wasn’t enough time to speak to all of them but his job was to contact as many as possible. He couldn’t even recall the last time he had the opportunity to conduct any serious research and in that way Intinman’s project had a liberating effect on him which was probably why he pursued it. It was cutting-edge and risky, everything his

daily life lacked and even a middle-aged rebellion against jaded respectability.

This project was more than just an adrenaline rush to him, it rekindled a passion for pure science he'd lost in the interminable years of cocktail parties, department socials and standing up in front of sleepy students and colleagues in musty auditoriums giving speeches on generally accepted theories. His wife, on the other hand, was enamored with all the social activity and hadn't even noticed his growing restlessness. That aspect of their lives gave her purpose and she was always planning the next event and what they should wear months in advance. He hadn't told her anything about the project.

He had a faculty meeting scheduled for 10:00 A.M., in ten minutes, so gathered up his notes and binder along with his briefcase and headed for the main conference room in another part of the building. The first test was close to being ready for inspection and he could try to match the DNA sequences when he returned. While locking the door and checking twice to make sure it was locked he was approached by Lance Morgan, director of the chemistry department, who had just rounded the corner in a beige blazer and striped navy tie.

"Hey, where are you off to in such a hurry?" in a jovially accusative tone; amused by Grimm's hasty and bashful manner. The irony made him uneasy.

"Got another administration meeting," trying his best to appear casual.

"Another long discussion about department policies and ways and means of improving other policies?"

"It's an endless cycle, isn't it?" Grimm groaned, "One might even call it vicious..."

"Hey! Did you hear what happened to Greg?" grinning

eagerly.

“No.”

“He received a commercial grant for a hundred and seventy five thousand dollars from one of the major chemical manufacturing companies in just one telephone call!”

“Great!” without discernible interest, “Pretty impressive I must say.” Grimm was unable to believe his station in life had been reduced to competing with the other departments for revenue intake.

Lance Morgan’s grin grew noticeably wider preceding his next question, “So how’s your department doing this year?”

“Good, good I suppose...well good enough relatively speaking. I really don’t know,” uncomfortably. “We’ve accepted a few new sponsors this year.”

Lance Morgan gave him a sly, amused chuckle, “I don’t believe you. You’re probably doing better than the rest of us! Mr. humble!” slapping him on the back with an overabundance of chumminess. “Well, glad to hear it. Glad to hear it! Run along, now...scoot...scoot. Don’t want to be late for your meeting.” And with that turned around and went whistling down the hall while Grimm stood gaping after him till he vanished. He arrived at the conference table where the president of the university was sitting with some of the committee members and advisors along with a few members of the faculty. They all wore navy blue or beige suits with solid or striped ties and neatly conservative patterns printed on them. The occasion exuded all the qualities of practical purpose and function. Internally Grimm groaned upon feeling the atmosphere absorb him like *The Blob*. The faces attentive and efficient as he bowed his head while looking for an available seat, relaying in a strange tone:

“Good morning and sorry I’m late. I was detained briefly

by an important call and couldn't tear myself away." True, it sounded like the most ready-made excuse in the world but under the circumstances it was the best he could come up with. The president glanced at him under severe, discerning brows as the others peered at their watches.

"No problem, Cornelius, we've only been waiting a few minutes. Please join us..." the president replied with patient dignity, motioning him toward an available chair which he graciously accepted, opposite the president.

"We have an important matter to discuss..." the president began, "...something unexpected has come up."

President Dithers Markley handed him a folder, "We have a new university policy to discuss which concerns an evolutionary process alleged to be taking place in the jungles and forests of the world. Maybe you've heard of it and maybe you haven't but it's quite controversial. It's called the *Superspecies* theory and involves your field primarily, Cornelius: biology." The comment made Grimm shudder, widening his eyes more than prudent and forcing him to gape. The president gaped back, expecting a reply.

"Yes, as a matter of fact, I have heard of it..." he answered riskily, "...sounds like it may have some merit," attempting to "read" the playing field and see how far he could promote his secret dealings with the presumed object of bringing them out in the open or at least avoid consequences if he were exposed. Very quickly discovering he couldn't push very far from the growing dissatisfaction on the president's face.

"Yes, it certainly does have some merit—in the way that anything does—but that's exactly what makes it dangerous. It has the power to convince people and capture their imaginations," stroking his outlandish black mustache, vaguely reminiscent of

a German nobleman, to emphasize his point.

Grimm gaped with greater intensity. “Dangerous? Don’t believe I understand.”

Markley’s reaction was firm. “It’s dangerous to assume that any small group of animals—bears especially—could develop what amounts to a “human-like” consciousness in any way, shape or form. It’s simply absurd and isn’t true to the spirit of science which a man in your position ought to know. Anyway, we’d like your input.”

The implications for Grimm were obvious and far-reaching and the path clearly laid out for him by his esteemed colleagues. To oppose Markley at this stage would cause a major disruption in the ranks; this he could clearly see from the gravely serious looks around the table. Recklessly he leaned into the blow, testing the boundaries of his quandary.

“You mean to say you don’t think it’s possible?” trying to sound like he was giving voice to a practical concern alone.

“I didn’t say that,” Markley snapped in growing frustration, “Anything’s possible. That’s not the point!” obviously irritated at having to justify himself in this manner; so much so he seemed at a loss to reveal the point himself. “The theory itself is based on such shaky evidence: a few attacks committed under questionable circumstances and interpreted by some madman—what’s his name?” asking the nervous-looking man seated to his left.

“Morey Intinman,” the man replied.

Grimm became addled hearing the name, sensing the immensity of pressure on him and caved a bit. “You certainly have a good point but what’s the big deal?”

“Well...” said Markley, recovering himself, “...universities across the nation are being required to take a stand on the

issue now that it's gained wider acceptance. Everyone wants to know where everyone else stands, for or against. Politicians, religious leaders, public interest groups, environmentalists are just a few of the major players in this drama and all have their own agendas. The country's universities are being pressured to polarize, offer guidance, biology departments in particular because the theory challenges some of the foundations of modern evolutionary biology."

Adopting a more somber tone, president Markley added, "It could have a major impact on funding as well." His normally languid eye became intensely clear and honed in on Grimm. "You're one of the old stalwarts of reason at this university, Cornelius," in point of fact, "We're counting on you to help us stand up to this attack on the university's core values."

For the moment, Grimm put aside the countless implications of this rather liberal interpretation of events as things were beginning to take on a recognizable shape: "funding" revealed it all. The university's Regents and sponsors (and perhaps a few local officials) had made their opinions known to Markley & Co., placing him in charge of bringing the message to the rank-and-file faculty. Markley sounded confident but looked scared, obviously feeling the pressure from all sides that would be impossible to oppose.

"What do you propose we do?" Grimm retreated a bit from his former swagger.

"The university needs to decide what side of the issue we're on—we need to agree. There are two sides and well there's the state committee to appease and they have a decidedly right-wing take on the issue...personally, I don't believe either side is...well...moderate...but..."

The "but" summed everything up nicely, Grimm thought. It

meant he wasn't acting on his own behalf and had no authority to do so but had the full intention of acting on others' against his own. Such is the way of the world. Grimm wondered, in bitter amusement, if adults weren't simply bodies separated from their minds by some perverse and untraceable form of social surgery.

"Shall I read some of the briefs?" another man at the table asked; a thin, expressionless, imperious-sounding man on Markley's right.

Markley introduced him, "Victor Hack, I believe you know of Dr. Grimm, head of our biology department, though I don't think you've ever met."

"No...", the man nodded hastily, opening a folder and rifling through a stack of papers noisily, "...though I have heard all about him," in a way that implied Grimm was something of an oddity. The dry-faced man continued unceremoniously, "To identify who the different groups are and help us decide what the university's policy should be, I want to read some correspondence from the state's education department. Essentially the issue has two sides: the "pro-human" advocates and the "pro-beast" advocates—also known as *Superspecies* opposition and *Superspecies* supporters. Here are a few comments from the organization Humans First!, obviously pro-human, published just three weeks ago in which the chairman stated:

"Let me summarize by making my view clear: we advocate the total and systematic destruction of these vicious creatures for everyone's sake and safety. We believe it is pointless for the biological community to suggest these "intelligent" creatures are attacking humans out of self-defense or some evolutionary impulse and just goes to show how anti-social and out of touch they are with the mainstream of the nation."

“Who is Humans First!?” in a vaguely belittling tone.

“A group with a lot of money and political clout, that’s who!” Markley responded with notable awe. “Many of the spokespersons are surviving family members of *Superspecies*’ victims which has garnered a ton of support from the public and sympathy in the press. That’s in what limited coverage the topic has been given so far which isn’t much. The university, being conservative by nature, will find it difficult to oppose this side of the issue because it’s like saying we support killing people. At least that’s how it’ll be perceived.”

Grimm was slowly becoming aware of an infinite number of problems surrounding the *Superspecies* issue, the proverbial can of worms as it seemed to him on the surface. It awakened him to what he was truly involved in: victims’ families getting together and forming alliances was an idea he hadn’t previously entertained, complicating matters immeasurably and raising the stakes with powerful and far-reaching implications that initially boggled the mind. Being labeled a hater of mankind for opposing these dogmatic views promised to be a formidable obstacle.

“Are they the ones the university must bow to so as not to jeopardize any funding?” Grimm inquired with careless indiscretion, assuming they had already made the transition to complete candor. Markley’s jaw dropped several inches upon hearing such frankness.

“The university doesn’t bow to anyone,” the honorable man pointed out urgently, “We merely cultivate long lasting friendships with our supporters that must be reciprocated, from time to time, by acts of good faith.”

Grimm let out an involuntary chuckle he immediately regretted. Markley’s face puckered up like a dried and shriveled prune

and became noticeably flushed, his customary and unshakeable dignity dropping down a few pegs.

“I didn’t mean...”

“Never mind,” dismissing the issue with a brief flip of his hand.

“Victor?”

“The other letters? Of course!” responding too quickly and reflecting his boss’s discomfort. “Let me see, other groups supporting control and extermination of the *Superspecies* are generally much smaller and not as well-funded as Humans First! Some are backed by Christian coalitions, others by highly placed businessmen, corporate types or congressmen on both sides of the aisle but mostly the right. Those worthy of mention are Man Before Beast and Defend Our Domain but as I said they’re smaller and less important by orders of magnitude. Rustling through the papers even more loudly than before, he focused on one sheet in particular and continued tonelessly, “Defend Our Domain released a public statement last month that I’ll quote:

“We don’t support the concept that the *Superspecies*, as they’re called, are beings of higher intelligence. It simply hasn’t been proven to our satisfaction yet. Nor has it been proven in the eyes of many like-minded individuals in the biological community burdened with a conscience. Therefore we reject the theory as false until it can be demonstrated incontestably otherwise. As for the bear attacks themselves, they must be dealt with in the harshest possible manner no matter what the cost, cause or evolutionary implications. Evolution, to my mind, is somewhat of a folly anyway. Human beings must be practical now and think primarily of their own survival.”

“Sounds like the group is composed mostly of religious types,”

Grimm observed.

“A good portion of the biological community too. The ones with strong religious beliefs,” Victor Hack added.

He rifled through the papers again as Grimm felt an indescribable pressure closing in on him. Failing to realize the multitude of special interest groups surrounding what he’d considered to be solely a scientific issue. He’d never thought about the possible social implications—the impact on society—or that they’d have such a bearing upon the outcome of a scientific theory and how much wider, more public and chaotic it made everything seem. It was as though he was helping in some way to upset the delicate balance of civilization and in that sense seemed kind of injurious.

Markley noticed his expression and appeared to have perceived his thoughts, approving of the transformation process, “You didn’t realize how big this thing was I know...,” peering over his reading glasses significantly.

“No.”

“It’s just beginning to come into public awareness.”

Grimm said nothing.

“Here’s another one,” Victor announced after locating something he’d been looking for:

“The other side of the issue houses an important group called the Victims of Human Cruelty supported principally by left-wing groups, environmental organizations and famous people in all walks of life with a decidedly liberal bent: movie stars, journalists, singers, etc. They also have the support of some of the larger “green” corporations in the country and half the Democratic congress,” raising the page up until it was outstretched in front of him and could be seen from the back, giving visible shape to his words.

“He’s done his homework...,” remarked Grimm with a cynical twist of the lip, “...especially regarding who’s backing whom.”

Markley flashed him an appalled look, “Yes!”

“Here’s the most recent statement from them...,” oblivious to the conversation going on around him, “...from Michael Eaton, the organization’s founder:

“Evolutionary theory is an undeniable fact without any genuine flaws in it as our opponents wish to claim, nothing that would impact the overall integrity of the concept anyway. For the right-wing crowd to suggest anything else is gross error on their part. This tremendous moment in scientific history cannot be stopped by their ignorance, deception or religious chicanery. If we allow them to destroy the very animals undergoing this tremendous evolutionary change it will be a crime against history! History will be our judge! While placing restrictions on these animals in this crucial stage of their development we run the risk of altering or halting the evolutionary process altogether. If this happens, all hope of seeing these animals develop as human beings did over hundreds of thousands of years will be lost—and such a window of opportunity may never exist again! The bears cannot be punished for attacking human beings since it’s evolution at work! They’re simply reacting to uncontrollable genetic and cognitive pressures transforming them into creatures that will eventually inherit a greater place in the world. The process must be allowed to develop unchecked and unhindered otherwise we’ll be guilty of standing in the way of one of the most important events in recorded history!”

“He certainly has a flair for the dramatic, doesn’t he?” Victor observed with a little joyless chuckle, noting Grimm’s expression becoming more overwhelmed and discouraged.

“The next largest group on the “pro-beast” side is The American Vision Foundation. Impressive name, isn’t it? The head of this organization’s a former MIT professor of political economy, a Nobel Prize winning author and very active in economic, political and environmental policy reform around the world. He’s also special envoy to the UN and has been for over fifteen years, making speeches at prestigious academic institutions worldwide each year. His books contain scary visions of global apocalypse caused by drastic alterations to the environment: global warming, air pollution, chemical spillages and the like as a result of the sovereignty of multinational corporations acting in an outlaw capacity and falling outside the jurisdiction of any national government. By the way, he’s a strong advocate of hydrogen-powered vehicles and has taken on the oil companies almost single-handedly in his quest to promote this technology but has been stonewalled every step of the way.”

“In an interview last month he stated his views on the *Superspecies* problem, “...I’m baffled at all the discussion on whether a *Superspecies* actually exists...to anyone who doubts their existence and what it implies for us I can only say you are living in a dream my friends! Without question they do exist: a highly-intelligent, super advanced being vying for recognition in the natural world. Therefore our focus would be better applied to answering the question of what we’re going to do in response to this phenomenon as a group of rational beings faced with this problem. Are we going to commit genocide against one of the important biological advancements on earth or permit it to come into its own without any meddling “intervention” on our part? If we do the right thing—the thing I’d suggest—the animals would be able to develop however

they need to, given room to grow, so they can become whatever nature or evolution intends them to be. If we have to tolerate a few losses along the way we must be prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice in the name of evolutionary progress, one of the principle foundations I might add of our society.”

Victor Hack’s voice rose a few notches in the last half of that sentence as though he’d ascended a cloud of idealistic fervor and was now basking in the glow of all that was high and mighty in the world. Odder still was that he didn’t believe in the overall viewpoint but sympathized with the ultimate goal: evolutionary progress which presumably everyone had their own opinion on. Grimm tried to sort it all out on the spot: the extreme differences of opinion, the inevitable and never-ending conflicts, the seemingly plausible arguments, the unrestrained passion, the discouraging results. It was all a bad dream, a tornado of abortive and disfigured intentions on all sides.

Repeatedly glancing at his watch (and always pressed for time) president Markley ventured to formulate his final summary, complete the business at hand and escape the musty little conference room before lunch. There were other matters more pressing to attend to for a man whose every moment was parceled into small bits of time like plots in a garden. Besides everything had a time limit and this he believed had reached its.

“As you can see there’s lots of controversy surrounding the issue and it’s terribly overwhelming,” narrowing his gaze on Grimm. “Now we’re asking for your input about what the university’s policy ought to be. Mind you, as department head you’ll be our central representative.”

Everyone stared at Grimm with a luminous keenness, un-

settling to say the least, and a strange silence filled the air in which the atoms themselves stopped to hear his response. He'd dreaded the question and felt it coming the entire time he sat listening to the long-winded build-up, "I'm willing to give you my humble opinion since it's all anyone can offer regarding an issue this large and so likely to have a major impact on the future..." without looking at any of them. Markley whispered to his assistants while the others at the table wore their best token smiles, appearing attentive and interested if only half-heartedly. The issue didn't really matter to them as nothing much did, truth be told, they were mealy-mouthed men of neatly arranged, stale and musty minds functioning merely to satisfy a neutral chain-of-being and Grimm felt disgusted with the entire scenario. It was a mystery even later he found difficult to unravel as a lull dropped unexpectedly into the conversation. Unable to sort through his multivariate thoughts and formulate a satisfactory answer on the spot, he stared with lips that opened and locked as he lifted his head and helplessly dropped it over and over. Victor read the situation and realized he might need additional encouragement after receiving the nod from the impatient president to press on with the exposition:

"Another significant "pro-beast" organization gaining a lot of attention these days for reasons that will soon become clear is Angels of Animals in Los Angeles," Victor said brightly, "I'll read you a letter they sent to the state's environmental commission last month. You're going to enjoy this I think:

"...The *Angels* believe in harmonious New Age coexistence and development for all concerned where a certain oneness of being and understanding will transform, transcend and catapult us all into the future. We'll be propelled into a future of tomorrow's yesterdays and laid bare upon the blessed beaches

of divine promise once we've learned to live all for one and one for all..."

Victor chuckled, "I didn't make any of that up either—it's intended to be the foundation of the creed! And if you can figure out what it any of that means then you might appreciate the grand finale:

"...We want everyone to know that the intelligent animals we now recognize as the *Superspecies* must be allowed to fully develop their capacities even if it means sacrificing a few human beings in the process. Just as the ancients sacrificed themselves for the greater glory of God and civilization, we must step aside and let the future come to pass, let cosmic harmony weave its majestic justice no matter what the consequences..."

"Tell him about the smaller organizations," insisted Markley as he was being handed a copy of something he briefly grazed over.

"Oh yes, thanks for reminding me..." turning toward Grimm, "...there are several other, smaller groups that have had significantly less of an impact in the *Superspecies* arena due to a tendency to take a more moderate approach which doesn't seem to resonate well with the public."

"Extreme views sell better," Markley drew from an extensive store of wisdom and experience that made Grimm wonder if it didn't sprout from a tendency to have extreme views.

"Sounds interesting but if these groups have almost no influence at all, what's the sense in talking about them?"

There isn't any," Victor agreed, "Except that, between you and me, the moderates are the only ones making any sense in this horrible mess! Moderate action shrewdly taken and stemming from a general principle of equitable, side-by-side, cooperative development between humans and animals makes an awful lot

of sense when you really stop and look at it. It's an intelligent plan."

"Stick to the point!" the president demanded in response to Victor's praise of the cowardly art of fence-sitting. Hack dipped his head slightly in acknowledgment of the reproach, "Of course there's another reason for talking about them: a man by the name of Morey Intinman, originator of *Superspecies* theory, is a confirmed moderate and his opinion has the power to shift the balance in their favor which worries a lot of folks."

Grimm tried not to react openly upon hearing Intinman's name mentioned because what's in a name anyway? He merely nodded gravely even though the act itself had no other significance than to mask his discomfort. Hack continued, "I'm not sure how much you know about Dr. Intinman's theory, it was developed about fifteen years ago and instantly created a lot of controversy in the scientific world as it was considered totally outrageous at the time. People rejected it without even reading it...biologists included! Even that wouldn't have been so bad because eventually it would've gained widespread acceptance except for the fact it was discovered the *Superspecies* were attacking and killing people. That's the real root of the problem today. These animals began expressing their survival skills by competing with mankind in a struggle for earthly dominance which was perhaps inevitable; it just wasn't expected. Funny isn't it how everything comes down to the most primitive conflict of all?"

Grimm's thoughts were still reeling after hearing Intinman's name mentioned as some sort of mythical being. A myth he was currently upset with for developing such a troublesome theory in the first place and convincing him to become part of it. Terrified the entire time his secret and illegal dealings with

the myth himself might be exposed along with the prospect of losing his standing at the university.

“According to the moderates, bears and humans each have valid claims that need to be addressed when developing any future course of action. The primary object being to balance the needs of both parties during the *Superspecies* growth period so neither feels stifled or destroyed in the process. This viewpoint isn’t as exciting as the more extremist views and doesn’t command major interest the way they do but it’s slowly catching on with more and more people who see the overall wisdom of it.”

Again Markley passed him an admonishing glance that Hack read as ordering him to tone down the praise a bit. Yet in direct conflict with that wish was the fact that Hack was assigned to present a complete picture of all sides so that Grimm could form an unbiased opinion. Markley be damned in this case!

“It sounds pretty good but how do they apply their theories in practice?” Grimm boldly inquired who really didn’t know much about them. He and Intinman never discussed all the various nuances of the theory and he suddenly felt intrigued to know more. In general their conversations centered around deadlines and challenges encountered during the testing process.

“You mean do they advocate controlling and killing bears to save humans or limiting human activity in areas where they live? The answer’s a resounding “no” on both counts: they don’t support animal genocide or allowing bears to attack human beings either. That’s what makes their approach so unique,” Hack explained excitedly, “They recognize that either course of action would be unrealistic and wouldn’t survive the test of time or feasibility.”

“What do they propose then?”

“I see you’re wondering how they manage to straddle both sides of the fence and get away with it...,” Hack observed with a sly grin and amiable twinkle, “...seems like a straightforward “either-or” situation on the surface, doesn’t it? Well, I can tell you the issue’s much more complex than that although the concept’s simple enough: do what’s best and what ultimately works for everyone by considering all the needs involved...”

Grimm looked frustrated and impatient, “And how do they do that exactly?”

“By understanding the nature of the beings involved and what is needed for each to thrive and survive—side-by-side coexistence in other words.”

“In an article released yesterday, Dr. Intinman claimed he’s drafted a plan to ensure peaceful and mutual development for both humans and animals that involves an understanding of the *Superspecies* learning process and applies specific knowledge and techniques to resolve the situation. He explains it’s not a typical Western dichotomy as it’s commonly interpreted to be but a situation where the *Superspecies* can be permitted to advance gradually, in a controlled fashion, without upsetting the delicate balance of our lives. The process wouldn’t be controlled by us of course because that would introduce an artificial factor into the mix but by time and nature alone since, according to him, the causes of the animals’ aggressive behavior have already been researched and tabulated but call into question some fundamental aspects of human nature. Meaning that the *Superspecies* sees us as essentially destructive beings in their rudimentary powers of observation and perhaps incapable of anything else. So, if the animal has the ability to moralize and pass judgment—if it’s reached the stage where wide-scale moral interpretations are possible—then it can

identify evil in another being quite readily. Therefore we must teach them to view us differently for peaceful coexistence but it would be easier, he was quick to point out, if we were actually different in reality.”

“I quote from the article: “Aggressive animals, if they cannot be tamed, may need to be isolated in the interim just as aggressive people are often isolated from the rest of the population. At the same time we ought not disturb the animals’ natural environment or threaten or harm it in any way since what we seek is a reciprocal relationship with them going forward. We respect their nature and growth and they, in turn, respect our lives. We’re somewhat responsible for bringing them along anyway, he believes, being the “wiser” species so it’s something we’ve fallen into for better or worse. He also warns against succumbing to the temptation of trying to control them since the world has never seen anything like this before and we’d only screw things up for them,” letting out a heavy sigh and continuing after a pause:

“We should keep in mind this is not a country, race, religion or a part of the world to be invaded or managed for moral idealism or profit as our historical response has typically been but something way beyond that. I hope someday enough people come to realize that.”

Grimm was very impressed with Morey. He never realized his partner possessed such eloquence! “Sounds like the best thing we can do is be impartial observers for our own edification as well as their development.”

“The situation is quite serious for us,” Markley explained, changing the subject impatiently, “Universities with prominent research departments like ours are being pressured to give statements regarding where we stand on the *Superspecies* issue

as previously mentioned. The papers have been calling my office repeatedly to set up a time to hold a press conference and state our position in a forum where they can assail us with questions. It will become a matter of public record so we need to pull together on what we tell the outside world. We can quibble all we want amongst ourselves in private but we must stand together in what we say to the public," in an urgent tone that bordered on desperation.

"Even if we have to fake it?" Grimm stared Markley directly in the face who returned his gaze with a hard inscrutable look like a cornered rodent.

"By now you must have a pretty good idea what the opposing sides are and where I stand on the issue—thoughts shared incidentally by the university administration and its supporters."

Markley genuinely believed this statement would impress Grimm with its intrinsic significance and the language he used was at the very least foreign to him, mingling "their" opinions with his own in an inextricable and unholy mix often found in the world of commercial business affairs. The president had become something of a non-entity reduced to the task of passing along the ideas of others rather than harboring any of his own.

"Yes."

"And you're familiar with this theory of course?"

Grimm nodded.

He felt trapped of course. There was a great deal he knew and wanted to express but the more he admitted the more he risked being exposed as a close confidant of Intinman pariah; potentially cheating himself out of a job in the process. He had no doubt the president would sway in whatever direction the dollars were flying since money was the object of his life and

he wasn't technically an academician. If the fists ever closed tightly over the cash flow his function in life would cease to exist. They had asked for his input in deciding university policy but that was simply a formality as everything was already pre-decided and all that remained was to pressure him into going along with it by any means necessary, which meant supporting the conservative "pro-human" side.

"I don't know very much," playing it safe and hoping by ignorance to avoid a long string of probing questions, "I read a few articles on it a while ago and it seemed like a novelty at the time but I've been so involved in my research, well you know how it is..." coming off vague and disinterested.

Markley, Hack and the others stared at him across the long table wearing faces of expectation, "I realize you have lots of work to do..." Markley relayed openly, "...the important matter now is where do you stand?"

Grimm shrugged his shoulders and cleared his throat in overture, "The truth is I like the position of the smaller groups best, the moderates, since they're the ones making the most sense in this tidal wave of chaos. I agree they can't possibly win because of too little support and not faring well with the public but if it were up to me we'd go that route for sure. I know it isn't but..." looking around and adding, "...they're small but may grow in the future."

"That's assuming people always do the sensible thing," Markley stated snidely, "I can tell you from personal experience they don't. You're probably the most reasonable person I know and I'm certain you do things everyday that make you pause and wonder or even worry—I *know* I do! We must be practical since this is politics and social affairs we're dealing with and not the neat, rational world of science," with more than a grain

of truth to his words.

“I’ve never understood the distinction but...” Oh my God! Grimm stopped mid-sentence, thinking: he’s right! People rarely do sensible things! This man—this article of fiscal festoon—ain’t as dumb as he looks! People do polarize into opposite camps on issues facing society, fighting like dogs for their imperialistic and comic ideologies that generally take shape as opposite extremes. He didn’t have any easy solution to the problem but who did? Grimm rarely considered the so-called “human” occupations in his daily life.

“Practical...” in a sort of semi-trance, “...we should be although I thought I was being...with the moderates. I guess you’re talking a different kind of practicality though...the social kind. What?” shaking his head.

“I didn’t say anything,” Markley snapped as Grimm’s listeners stared in awe with some questioning his sanity.

“Sorry,” he replied to the inquiring looks around him, “Questions like these have always gotten the better of me and made me wonder whether I can know anything for certain. I confess I’ve never liked the feeling very much because I’ve always had an abundance of facts, figures and systematic concepts at my fingertips to thwart any prevalence of doubt. Social issues are entirely alien to me.”

The president noted with pride, “Social problems do present a unique set of circumstances. There are lots of variables and unknowns to consider. The central and most important feature? People are the most unpredictable variable of all.” Spoken like a true expert, thought Grimm, deepening his insight into the subject as Markley was an old hand at the game who understood that a few choice words were priceless for coaxing and leading others (often by the nose) with overtones

that flowed like a placid, glass-topped river, swirling over his listeners and leaving them transfixed and refreshed.

“We can all appreciate the wisdom of the moderates but can’t support them at this point,” Markley explained, “I wish we could. They’re just too small and unimportant and we’d get pressure from both sides if we did, making us outcasts in the academic community for standing behind unpopular views!”

Thinking this a bit drastic, Grimm responded with unusual calm, “Then you propose we support the “pro-human” side so we can maintain all our current fiscal relationships without jeopardizing the school’s reputation? Sacrifice academics for money-gathering?”

“What’s wrong with that?” Markley replied bitterly, “I have a college to run, all of which requires money to keep chugging along and I don’t need any more problems than I already have. Besides, don’t get high and mighty with me, Cornelius, your department would be the first to suffer if any of our benefactors suddenly retracted their generous support!”

“What he’s trying to say is we can’t afford to upset the university’s friends and sponsors by championing any radical or controversial views. They depend on us to uphold a certain standard,” Hack added in a more gracious tone, regretting his earlier praise of moderates. “We must take the least provocative stance during these politicized times in order to give the impression people can count on us to be the reasonable, balanced and conservative institution they’ve come to expect. Above all, we must be consistent.”

“Standards? Consistency? Is that what we’re all about now? Funny I thought we were first and foremost an academic institution not a bank! Did it ever occur to you this might be an important scientific discovery we don’t want to go against?”

As an academic body with a reputation to uphold we may want to tread a bit more lightly until we know exactly what we're dealing with since it might come back to haunt us later. Are we going to stand up for what's right, true and factual now or simply what's safe?" gazing with fixed intensity at Markley, expecting a satisfactory answer.

"What's that supposed to mean? I'm not doing what's best for the university?" Markley fumed, feeling nettled in a sensitive area.

"Uh, could you please clarify that for us, Dr. Grimm?" Hack attempted to alleviate the mood with diplomacy.

Grimm continued solemnly, "If we don't get on the right side of the issue now, at the start, we could end up looking like fools in a few years when the ideas of the small and moderate groups ring true and become accepted by more and more people. We'll no longer be considered a cutting edge institution that takes risks in the name of academic integrity but one that flops around on its belly awaiting orders from the masters of public opinion."

"Hmmm...didn't realize you were such a lyric poet," Markley replied snidely, "I like how you paint such a flattering portrait of the university as the lapdog of the established order. Is that what you really think of us? Maybe you're simply unhappy here, is that it?" gazing at him with a faint, primal gleam before glancing sharply at Victor.

"Can we get back to the matter at hand?" Hack pleaded with them. Markley finally ceased staring at Grimm as though he wished to crush him and nodded gravely.

"Yes, let's...," he heartily agreed.

"What Dr. Grimm's saying, if I understand correctly, is that the university might appear in a bad light someday if it adopts

any expedient now. Is that a fair assessment?" Hack inquired gingerly.

"More or less. The safest route now may turn into the hardest one later."

"Or the smaller groups could be proven wrong and we'd have nothing to worry about," Markley countered, "Then all this talk and worrying would be for naught, wouldn't it?"

"Which would be fine if we were businessmen by trade but we're not, we're academics, learned men entrusted with championing the undefiled truth. We can't afford to take the safest route while going about business as usual, avoiding offending anyone just to protect our bottom line. What would that do to us?"

Receiving no reply other than dismayed and disgusted looks, Grimm continued, "It would shatter the reputation of the university completely and we'd have no credibility left to speak of." Which was no small matter to him. He could handle just about anything other than becoming an object of ridicule to his peers.

"What's most important is the good of the university before anyone's personal benefit," Hack droned on vaguely, sticking to safe assertions and diplomatic tones to smooth things over. "I see no problems with supporting the "pro-human" side if that's what's necessary," glancing sideways at Grimm, "And though I do agree you have a point, you really must see things from our perspective because we have to sustain the life of the university which is funding we can't do without. Academic integrity and reputation are certainly important but we need a simple and easy solution here and now that won't jeopardize the university's status."

"Anything to keep the rickety old junket afloat?" Grimm

noted venomously as Markley's face grew hard and he wanted to say something but relented to Victor, allowing him to perform his magic.

"Eventually we'll have to pick one side or the other..." to Grimm, "...and we'd prefer you came over to the "pro-human" side, at least in the interim, until the main thrust of public scrutiny blows over. We can always change our minds later if we find it beneficial to do so," in an appeasing tone, hoping to wrap things up quickly.

"Change our minds after committing to one side? Fabulous idea! We'll be forever known as people who shift course whenever it's convenient to do so," in utter disgust. Grimm was primarily concerned with his face being the one people associate with the university's waffling policies since it had the potential to ruin him personally and professionally but what could he do? He couldn't risk going out on a limb for Intinman and perhaps, in a wild twist of fate, it was the very best route to take since coming out publicly against the *Superspecies* would create an effective diversion from any suspicion into his association with the project in the first place. That being said, it would require him to sacrifice his own personal reputation to hide that relationship, a step he wasn't prepared to take with any confidence but time was closing in and they needed an answer right away.

"Of course, it won't threaten any of the university's funding sources to support that position either, will it? A slight ancillary benefit of this whole affair..." Grimm sneered at Hack, "...I see you gentlemen already have your minds made up so what do you need me for? Rubber stamp endorsement?"

Markley snarled, "Do you find something particularly amusing about this situation, Cornelius?"

“Absolutely NOT!” he scoffed in agony, “Nothing could be less amusing than coming here and finding the cards stacked against me before I arrived.”

“You shouldn’t take it that way,” Hack implored, allowing his usual aplomb to slide a bit, “We were simply hoping you’d see things our way—be realistic about this. We’re on the same side.”

“Actually I don’t see it your way as far as that goes but it appears I’m trapped against my will so I’ll go along with whatever’s best for the university,” snickering and praising himself for how convincing he sounded as the reluctant captive. He had no other choice anyway so might as well sit back and enjoy the ride.

President Markley was stunned into silence, “I...uh...we... appreciate that, Cornelius, I assure you,” flashing him a faint, unnatural smile. “You’re finally viewing things in the right light and eventually you’ll see it’s the right decision.”

Grimm frowned. “Yes, I’m sure I will,” dryly, “Though, I wish I had your knack for making breezy, sweeping statements,” unable to resist the final opportunity to take a crack at the meticulous administrator.

Markley’s face turned puzzled, working out whether he was the object of a backhanded compliment and glancing sidelong at Grimm, “If you’re saying I have a way with words, I appreciate that.”

“I guess that’s it, then,” remarked Hack, “We’ll notify you once we’ve set up a press conference. How much time do you need to prepare?”

“No worries, I’ll prepare a neutral statement that doesn’t make me sound like a total narrow-minded reactionary. Those that know me would be shocked—two weeks at least.”

“We also have to discuss what you’re going to say before you

say it to make sure we're all in agreement," Markley explained.

"What's the matter, don't you trust me? Think I'll say something I shouldn't? Don't worry, I'll let you read it beforehand," chuckling in disbelief.

"Not only that, we have to make sure to say the least amount possible concerning the *Superspecies* issue. Keep it vague above all else. We've shown you how deeply the lines are drawn so let's avoid incurring anyone's wrath if at all possible."

"Spoken with the backbone of a true man-of-war," Grimm replied with false admiration and a quick nod; consciously leaving out the word "Portuguese" in his description. "If that's it, I'm going back to the office. I've got loads to do."

To his back, the president shouted, "You'll see it's all for the best, Cornelius, don't worry!"

But Grimm was more worried than ever. His reputation was at stake and could easily be shattered by his cleverly conceived plan to divert attention from any involvement in the project. So many things could go wrong with it and his association with Intinman might be discovered in the end in spite of his best efforts. Deception makes no guarantees. Outthinking himself was also a potential pitfall, forcing the intricate plan to backfire and wasting the entire effort trying to avoid negative consequences. He wandered through the sterile white hallways decked out in drab green and brown mouldings reminding him of a hospital, turning over and measuring his myriad thoughts. He'd call Intinman as soon as he got back to the office and tell him what happened so he could make up his own mind what to do but for the moment escaped out to the main courtyard. Needing some space and open air for the moment and finding an empty bench set off from the main pathways. He sat down, removed his shoes and gazed idly at the sky while listening to

the birds hidden from view. A relaxing and ever-present refrain. How suffocated he felt in that room at the conference table being coached and coaxed like a trained seal to get in front of the public and yield to its will. "Disgusting," he concluded at last after considering it longer than reason warranted. He observed the students plodding along, glancing up at the buildings, the sky, the order of things which there didn't seem to be much of now or maybe he didn't wish to face it. Perhaps it was just too awful to face and chilled him to the bone. He noticed their determined and confident faces and what seemed a belief in something he found curiously absent in himself and the contrast made him want to speak even though there was no one to reply:

"I once looked that way," he said to himself, staring at one particularly confident young man, "What happened to me over the years?" A sad melody that rang true to his present mood. One young girl and her companion passing by glanced over at the funny-looking man on the bench with his shoes off, giggling, smiling, pointing and wondering at the strange expression on his face but Grimm didn't notice. He was too engrossed in the open space of the sky above: moist clouds that dragged along the warm summer wind on an orange-streaked express train, shadowy and carefully contoured clouds covered from white to black to red to gray depending on the height and position of the surface with pale blue as the backdrop popping out in clear, broad, random strokes.

Grimm walked back to his office while taking a careful note to see if the light was switched on in the lab. There might still be some graduate students working late on their theses and he didn't want any witnesses around taking an interest in the experiment he'd left to process, wondering what it was and asking a lot of embarrassing questions. Fortunately there

wasn't. He inspected the apparatus, switched on the computer-modeling program and began logging and comparing results. Bringing up colorful DNA images on the screen and placing the data results from White River samples alongside several key signature gene models while checking them for the presence of a multitude of individual indicators. He poured over the endless helix chains swirling before his eyes like miniscule tornadoes, feeling a bit cross eyed, flipping them this way and that to check each side and highlighting areas where the sequences appeared to match for a closer look later. It was an arduous, painstaking task requiring long hours of careful study and analysis and, in all, eighteen separate indicators required checking but he was already beginning to see a distinct pattern taking shape.

If all or most of the indicators were present and occupying the correct positions along the nucleotide chain sequence, existence of *Superspecies* gene sequences was near certainty. However one hundred percent certainty still wasn't possible given there was considerable room for human error and doubt, it being a new theory and all. The selected indicators were only the agreed upon ones by those currently involved in *Superspecies* research and there might be other yet undiscovered ones.

"All the data on these tiny little chains...," he mused with eyes transfixed on the screen, "...and what are they trying to tell me today?"

