

*An Honorary Degree*

*Krzysztof R. Apt*



### *Setting*

Department of Computer Science at a University in the U.S.

### *Cast*

#### **Professors**

CHRIS ANDERSON – witty computer wizard inclined to sleep during meetings

JACK ROBERTS – specializing in artificial intelligence family man

FRANK SCHULTZ – computer literate Jack's friend with a weakness for alcohol

TERRY WARREN, the chairman

JEREMY WILSON – specializing in sophisticated systems, receiver of an honorary degree

#### **Jack Roberts' family**

ADAM, Jack's son

MARY, Jack's wife

#### **Applicant**

KUMAR – visiting Indian postdoc from Berkeley

#### **Students**

GABRIEL – a Romanian PhD student

JIN SONG – Chinese, ready to submit his PhD thesis

KATHY REES – attractive short skirted red-hair PhD student

### *From the author*

This scandalous play draws on my 28 years of experience as a researcher in computer science. Many people asked me how much of what is reported here has really happened. Let me only admit that my wife has recently followed a photography course.



*Act I*

**Around 7 pm, at Jack's house**

[*A living room of an unimaginative house, with two couches, a coffee table, a single large plant, a TV set, and an empty bookshelf with some family photos.*]

ADAM: [*taking off his iPod*] Mom, when is Dad coming? I'm hungry.

MARY: [*with an apron around her waist*] I guess any moment now.

ADAM: And why was he so angry yesterday evening?

MARY: He told me that he had wasted 3 days studying a research paper.

ADAM: [*astonished*] Wasted? What do you mean?

MARY: Well, he told me that he made a mistake and thought he had to referee it for some scientific journal. But it was the wrong paper. Now he has to study the right paper. It's also 50 pages long, he said, so it will keep him busy again for at least another three days.

ADAM: But what's wrong with reading a paper for his work?

MARY: Well, according to your Daddy there are so many scientific papers around that you only study the ones you are asked to read.

ADAM: And why do these scientists write so many papers?

MARY: Well, otherwise they don't get a salary increase.

ADAM: But Dad is always saying that even though he writes new papers, he still has not got a salary increase for the past three years.

MARY: [*surprised*] How do you know all this?

ADAM: He told me that this is why we can't afford a trip to the West Coast.

MARY: But Adam, you are too young to understand these matters. The whole Department did not get an increase.

ADAM: Not true. Daniel told me that his Dad did and he has been with the Department as long as our Dad.

MARY: It's really strange what kind of things you discuss with your friends from school.

ADAM: Daniel also told me that his father got some special degree, honoric cause, or something.

[*Jack opens the front door and enters home.*]

ADAM: Dad, why are you so late?

JACK: [*loudly*] Hi everybody. I had to print something for Mom and could do this only after 5 o'clock.

ADAM: Why?

JACK: My son, it's really not your business. Mary, I'm really sorry. I tried to print out this booklet for you but the format turned out to be wrong so I shall have to do it again tomorrow.

MARY: No problem. Nice anyway that you remembered about it. But really, I need it for this Saturday, so tomorrow is the last day.

JACK: [*irritated*] I know, I know. Actually, I must say I am really furious.

MARY: Why? What happened?

JACK: Well, it was really an awful day. First I waited for nothing till 5 pm to print this thing for you. Then there is Wilson ... And then I ended up in a traffic jam because I left late.

MARY: What about Wilson? What happened?

JACK: [*in a grave voice*] He got a *honoris causa* degree.

MARY: I know.

JACK: What? How?

MARY: Their son told it to Adam at school today.

JACK: And now Wilson is boasting that this is because his wife allows him to work at the office on Saturdays. [*throws an angry look at his wife*]

MARY: Well, Jack, you should remember that on Saturday I have my photography class and Adam is really just too small to stay at home alone. But next year ...

JACK: Are you implying that next year I could work on Saturday? But I really don't want to ...

MARY: Darling, if you don't want to you don't have to. After all, these honorary degrees are not so important.

JACK: That is what I think too, but everybody else seems to think differently.

MARY: Do you actually say 'honoric causa' or 'honoris causa'?

JACK: [*angrily*] Better ask Wilson: he would know.

MARY: Jack, please calm down. After all, it's not the end of the world. We are not dead!

JACK: Almost.

ADAM: Dad, I recall an article in the newspaper in which they said that Winnie Mandela, who has just been convicted of some crimes, also holds a doctor honoric causa degree.

JACK: Really? Adam, you are not joking?

ADAM: Dad, no really. I will find the newspaper. [*walks away to another room*]

JACK: [*brightening up*] He is a truly brilliant kid! I really think we are bringing him up the right way. If it is true, I shall use it tomorrow during this working lunch we have.

MARY: Jack, there is one thing I need to tell you. [*hesitating*] Wilson also got a salary increase.

JACK: What? How do you know this?

MARY: Adam also learned it from their Daniel.

JACK: What? It's really strange what these kids talk about nowadays. Wilson was probably boasting about it at home.

MARY: Well, perhaps we ourselves should discuss such matters only when Adam is asleep. He apparently told our neighbour, I mean Gina, that your last paper was rejected again for a conference.

[*in an exasperated voice*] And to think that all the time she believed that you are a great scientist!

### **Next day at the Department, during a lunch break**

[*A typical meeting room, with a long table, part of which continues behind the stage. A number of posters from scientific conferences hang on the wall, all attached with the thumbtacks. Five people, including Jack, sit around the table. One of them, at the end of the table, sits sleeping. In front of each person there lies a pile of papers. In the middle of the table some cans with drinks and a tray with sandwiches.* ]

TERRY: Colleagues, now that we have settled the issue of how many new

positions we shall be able to finance for the next year, let me move on to the matter of determining the areas in which they should be.

FRANK: Well, this is not a simple matter, because there are several areas in which we don't have enough qualified faculty, for example in databases.

TERRY: Are you implying that you are not well qualified, since you teach databases?

FRANK: [*angrily, holding a sandwich in his hand*] This is absolutely not what I said. I meant that we need to have more faculty staff in databases so that we can also offer more specialised courses on databases.

JACK: [*finishing a Coca Cola can and slightly burping*] But the same can be said about my area, artificial intelligence. And for that matter about several other areas in our Department.

[*a murmur of approval*]

TERRY: I find that the matter of new positions cannot be discussed on such terms. This brings me to the matter of the honorary degree that our esteemed colleague Wilson will get next week from the University of Nice. Jeremy, my sincere congratulations.

WILSON: [*the only one dressed formally, in a jacket and tie*] Thank you Mr Chairman. You meant Niece, of course. [*grabs a sandwich from the tray*]

TERRY: Jeremy, please don't be so official. I'm sorry. Yes, yes, Niece, of course. But you still spell it 'N-I-C-E', right? [*looks uncertainly at Wilson*] I do propose that in recognition of Jeremy's new achievement we allocate one, or even two new positions, to his research area, sophisticated systems.

JACK: Well, before we do this, I would like to return to the matter of the degree of honoris causa itself. As you all might recall, there was recently an article in a newspaper mentioning at the occasion of the trial of Winnie Mandela that she holds a degree of doctor of honoris causa from the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands.

WILSON: Jack, how could you?

JACK: What do you mean? I am just quoting facts. I am not implying that you will go to prison, as well.

TERRY: Colleagues, please calm down.

JACK: All I wanted to say is that a degree of honoris causa can be a delicate



matter that this Department needs to discuss without confusing it with the matter of the vacancies.

FRANK: Well, there are also these junk emails in which they offer you a University degree based on your current knowledge, with no further study needed.

TERRY: I think, Frank, that you would get a very low degree, if this procedure were implemented.

WILSON: [*pompously, putting his sandwich on the table*] Mr Chairman. I am really surprised by the way my honorary degree is being discussed here. You see, computer science started with the assumption that everything can be expressed using zeros and ones. Thanks to my fundamental work this assumption is finally being questioned.

[*Wilson stops to check the effect of his words. Jack and Frank exchange looks. Wilson resumes.*]

Perhaps this is not the right place to discuss my scientific achievements. In any case, this degree, apart from doing justice to my lifelong efforts to apply sophisticated systems in computer science, is also very prestigious for our Department.

We really should not overlook the fact that this way the Dean might accord our Department a special status, something he promised already two years ago, but did not bother to, I'm very sorry, I meant, did not succeed in implementing.

[*Jack and others nod.*]

TERRY: Indeed, indeed. There is also this issue of somebody who would like to come here on sabbatical. Jeremy, can you tell us something about it?

WILSON: Thank you Terry. Well, I was contacted by Dave Cook from Seattle. He was inquiring whether he could spend sabbatical at our Department. He is impressed by the research being done here; rightly so, may I add. I printed his CV. I must say, really impressive. It's almost as good as mine.

FRANK: The difference is that he is not as modest as you are.

WILSON: [*not realising the irony*] Indeed, indeed. Anyway, Terry, what reply should I send?

TERRY: [*looking at his watch*] I'm afraid we have to postpone this matter to our next working lunch. We don't have much time left. Let me only quickly handle the problem of the junk mail that Frank proposed to discuss. Frank, where is your list?

[*Frank passes him a piece of paper.*]

TERRY: [*looking at it*] Gentlemen, who is receiving emails about Viagra?

[*Everybody raises a hand.*]

TERRY: And about enlarging your penis?

[*Wilson and Jack exchange an uneasy look. Everybody raises a hand.*]

TERRY: And from Africa about some urgent business transactions?

[*Everybody raises a hand.*]

TERRY: Next, about lolita's?

[*Frank raises his hand.*]

WILSON: About lolita's?

FRANK: [*to Wilson*] I shall explain later.

TERRY: OK, I see that this is a serious problem. I shall discuss the matter with the system maintenance group. I'm sure they can solve this problem.

[*looking at his watch*] Gentlemen, it's one o'clock. I have to adjourn this meeting. We need to attend now the lecture of this candidate for a postdoc position.

[*They all stand up and leave the room.*]

TERRY: [*leaning to Wilson, softly*] Jeremy, I am not attending this lecture. Can you come with me to my office for a minute?

WILSON: Sure, sure.

[*Terry and Wilson leave together the meeting room and enter Terry's office. The office has several expensive chairs, an excessively large table with a telephone and a single pile of documents at it, a bookshelf and a desk with a computer.*]

TERRY: Jeremy. Congratulations again on your honorary degree. Don't pay attention to what these idiots were saying.

WILSON: Why should I? It's all plain jealousy. They just can't accept that I am doing important stuff while they are not. I really think that this honorary degree of mine shows how sophisticated systems are becoming more and more relevant in computer science.

TERRY: [*completely ignoring what Wilson just said*] Jeremy, I just wanted to suggest that you use my personal funds to travel to Nice for the ceremony.

This way you don't need to lean on your Departmental grant and you can keep it in reserve for later trips.

WILSON: That's very nice of you. But it's not necessary. The administration of the Nice University wrote to me that they will cover my travel expenses.

TERRY: But what about your wife?

WILSON: [*astonished*] Actually I did not think about it. Do you think Nancy should go as well?

TERRY: Well, it might be good: you would project an image of a scientist that is respected both at work and at home. [*adds sadly, in a somewhat confidential tone*] You know that this is not the case with all of us.

WILSON: I know, I know. I'm really sorry about it, Terry. So things are not going any better?

TERRY: Alas, now that she has started using email it has gone completely out of control. First she was calling me at my office with all sorts of idiotic complaints, until I asked her to stop. So now she keeps sending me offensive emails from home, sometimes five per day. Look for example at this one I got just before our lunch. [*points to the computer screen*]

WILSON: [*Leans over the screen and reads from it. After a while*] So you did not clean the dishes after breakfast again? [*trying to be funny*] Bad boy! [*Terry throws an angry look at Wilson. Says nothing.*]

WILSON: [*resumes the conversation*] Now, returning to your question. How should I finance Nancy's trip? A 3 day flight to Nice won't be cheap.

TERRY: Exactly. But now you have funding for your air-fare from two sources. I leave the details of how to implement all this properly to you. In any case, just so that you know, my expenses as Chairman are not checked that thoroughly.

WILSON: Sure, sure. Terry, it's awfully considerate of you. And creative.

TERRY: Don't mention it. Your wife certainly deserves it. Ah, one last thing, before I forget. Do you think we should accept this postdoc who is giving the talk right now?

WILSON: Who? This postdoc? What's his area?

TERRY: AI, Jack's stuff.

WILSON: That kind of settles it. Doesn't it?

TERRY: I got it. A pity though, he seems to have a good file. Actually I did not have time to look into it. He got a PhD at Berkeley.

WILSON: Why bother? Would you like to strengthen Jack's hand in the Department?

TERRY: Of course not. Just wanted to hear your opinion.

WILSON: [*stands up*] Have to go now Terry. [*Approaches the door, but before opening it starts looking at the bookshelf of Terry. After a while picks up a book.*] May I?

TERRY: Sure, sure. Anything interesting?

WILSON: You don't remember this book? I think I showed it to you last year already. [*browses it and opens at some page*] You see? Here. They cite me.

TERRY: [*A bit embarrassed. Does not know what to say.*] Indeed, indeed. Congratulations.

WILSON: And those idiots in our Department? I don't think their work has ever been cited in a book. [*opens the door and leaves*]

### **In the afternoon, at Wilson's office**

[*A neatly maintained office, with books and journals arranged in rows on the bookshelves. An expensive armchair, two chairs, one in front of a large desk with a computer. Wilson sits in his armchair and studies a map of France. A knock at the door.*]

WILSON: [*folds a map*] Come in!

[*A young Chinese man casually dressed enters the office.*]

WILSON: Ah, Jin Song, please come in.

JIN SONG: Professor Wilson, I heard about your honoris causa degree. Congratulations.

WILSON: [*in an important tone*] Thank you, thank you. What brings you here, Jin Song?

JIN SONG: You might actually remember my email from yesterday. I wrote that I do need your comments on my PhD thesis urgently, since I have to submit the final version to the administration by the end of next week at the latest.

WILSON: Right, right. I remember. It's, hmm, it's actually reasonably well written. [*after a pause, thinking deeply*] Still you might improve your English here and there. For example, [*starts browsing the manuscript and stops at a random page*] You wrote here 'We now get'. It should be 'We get now'.

JIN SONG: [*politely*] Thank you Professor Wilson.

WILSON: I also found some typos. Like here. [*points to some page in the manuscript*]

JIN SONG: I actually caught all the typo's with a spell checker yesterday. But thank you anyway.

WILSON: So here it is. [*gives the manuscript to Jin Song*]

JIN SONG: [*browses through the manuscript*] I see you marked here the headings on every page. What's wrong with them?

WILSON: [*in a self-important tone*] You should remember that the house style in this Department is that in the page headings only the first word should be in capitals. So I had to correct it on every page.

JIN SONG: But Professor Wilson, you did not need to mark every page! It would have been enough if you wrote that I need to change it in all three chapter titles. The page headings are then generated automatically: one does not type them.

WILSON: Right, right. But this way you will remember to change it on every page.

JIN SONG: [*amazed*] I see. Do you have any other comments, Professor Wilson?

WILSON: Hmm, no, actually not. But don't forget to change all these page headings. Would you?

[*Jin Song leaves Wilson's office, shaking his head in disbelief.*]

### **In the afternoon, at Jack's office**

[*The office is in a terrible mess, with piles of papers and books on the floor. A desk crowded with a computer, a telephone, several plastic cups and another pile of articles on it, two cheap chairs, and two bookshelves with chaotically arranged books and articles.*]

JACK: [*on the phone*] Frank, how about a cup of coffee in the cafeteria?

[*A sleepy voice on the other side of the phone*]: Actually, you woke me up. But are they still open?

JACK: Of course, it's only 3 pm.

[*A couple of minutes later, in the cafeteria. A number of empty tables, with some plastic cups and trays with empty plastic plates on them.*]

JACK: [*sitting at a table, sipping his coffee*] How do you drink your coffee?

FRANK: [*yawning*] As usual, with milk, no sugar.

JACK: [*stands up and returns after a minute with another coffee, spilling a bit on his fingers while walking*] Frank, do you agree that this Wilson is an asshole?

FRANK: Well, he certainly knows how to manipulate others.

JACK: What do you mean?

FRANK: Have you thought about how he got his doctor honoris causa?

JACK: No. How?

FRANK: Well, I don't know either, but certainly he did not get it for his scientific contributions.

JACK: Well, speaking about his scientific contributions, he did publish a lot, though I don't think it's worth much.

FRANK: Do you know how he has managed to have so many publications? It's elementary, my dear Watson. First he publishes a paper in a workshop, then in a conference, with a slightly different title, but otherwise the same, adding a footnote that a preliminary version appeared in this and that workshop. And then, with a bit of luck, he tries to get the same paper in a journal, with yet another variation on the title. Usually, he just adds the word 'revisited' at the end. Actually, recently he started to use another title: 'A closer look at' and here he adds some key word from the previous title.

JACK: That's a bit exaggerated. I only use the workshop and conference approach.

FRANK: Exactly, me too. But still he got his honoris causa. To be honest with you I think he somehow manipulated the authorities of the University of Nice into giving him this honorary degree.

JACK: To be frank, I beg your pardon Frank, I mean, to be honest, how do you expect to prove it?

FRANK: Come on Jack, life is not mathematics. One cannot prove necessarily everything here. But I suspect that once you are as influential as Wilson now is you can start trading horses and offer somebody help in getting a highly competitive grant, for example, in return for a honorary degree.

JACK: What do you mean? Do you think he actually arranged such a deal?

FRANK: You can never be sure, but if you dig a bit deeper ...

JACK: By the way, speaking about his numerous publications, did you hear that he tells all of his students that they should not forget to add his name to their publications? And then he does not even read these papers.

FRANK: How do you know?

JACK: I learned it from his PhD student during my office hours. Actually, this student showed me something remarkable. He and another PhD student recently published a joint paper with Wilson in a journal and in the acknowledgements you can read the following comment: 'The authors thank Professor Wilson for his helpful comments.'

FRANK: What? It does not make sense. 'The authors thank Professor Wilson'? But Wilson is one of the authors!

JACK: Exactly. So what happened was that these two students wrote a joint paper themselves and once they were ready Wilson told them to add his name as an author. So to take revenge on him they did not modify the acknowledgements and now it is immortalised in print that Wilson thanks himself for helpful comments. Anyway, who cares? It's another 'write only' paper: nobody will read it.

FRANK: A great story! And what did Wilson say about it?

JACK: Nothing. I told you already that he does not read his papers. He is blissfully unaware of the problem.

FRANK: Oh, yah. This reminds me of a similar story about Terry. He was rushing last year to meet the deadline for submitting the final version of a paper to the conference proceedings and by mistake forgot to remove all the comments meant only for his student co-author. So now he has a publication with comments like: 'Are you sure it is true?' or "Add here some citations to my papers.' right inside the paper.

*[They both laugh.]*

FRANK: Actually, I understand that because of this stupid error the paper shot up in the citation rankings. The reason is that sociologists discovered it and quote it all the time as proof of how unethical computer scientists are. As if they were any better. And Terry even started to refer to it as his most cited publication not realising the reason!

JACK: Anyway, to stress that I am a different type of scientist I put in my homepage the statement 'I read all my publications'.

FRANK: Jack, don't be ridiculous. Nobody will believe you.

JACK: You will be astonished. Since I put this notice last year, I have received quite a few emails with congratulations.

FRANK: What do you mean 'with congratulations'? Congratulating you on what?

JACK: Well, people were congratulating me on my courage and integrity. One student from Germany even wrote that he doubts that in his country any scientist would dare put such a notice in his homepage.

FRANK: Come to think of it, why has nobody in our Department noticed that you put this statement in your homepage?

JACK: Well, I guess each of us reads only one's own homepage ...

FRANK: Now that you mention it. The other day I entered Wilson's office and what do I see on his screen? His homepage prominently displaying his photo. So I asked him, why. He said 'Oh, I just started the Explorer and I keep my home page as the initial page. This way I am sure to have it under my fingertips whenever I need it.' What do you think of that?

JACK: Well, actually I don't see anything wrong with it. In fact, that is what I am doing, as well ...

*[Somebody is approaching them.]*

FRANK: Oh, hi Chris, will you join forces for a coffee?

CHRIS: Why not?

JACK: I did not see you today during the Department lunch ...

FRANK: He was, he was. You did not see him since he was actually taking a nap in a chair behind you.

CHRIS: Indeed. But I have to admit I actually sleep much better during the



lectures. Then only one person is talking and as soon as I hear a monotonous voice I fall asleep. Like today during the lecture of this applicant ...

FRANK: And I remember, when this prominent fellow from MIT visited us, Jack, what's his name, you fell asleep in the first row as soon as he started his talk. It was a real embarrassment.

CHRIS: OK, OK. But when Susanne Dahl visited our Department and gave a talk I did not fall asleep at all.

FRANK: True, true. I still remember how you were staring at her during the whole lecture. And your questions during her talk really did not make much sense.

CHRIS: [*astonished*] Really? I tried to sound as if I followed her talk.

FRANK: I think you were actually following the way she was breathing ...

CHRIS: [*dreamy*] Well, I still remember, she had a great haircut and wore a smashing dress, a khaki colour ...

JACK: With me it's actually completely different. I have a problem: I can't fall asleep in airplanes and during lectures.

FRANK: We were actually discussing Wilson.

CHRIS: Yaah, Wilson ... You remember how he behaved during Dahl's lecture?

JACK: No, how? I did not attend her lecture.

CHRIS: [*with a sigh*] He said 'Thank God'.

JACK: What's wrong with that?

CHRIS: What's wrong? Well, he said it after Dahl said at a certain moment 'I'm losing my voice'. Now thanks to him she won't show up here again, I'm afraid.

JACK: Ah, I see ...

FRANK: And what do you think of his brand new doctor honoris causa degree?

CHRIS: What? Really? Did he get one? How do you know?

JACK: [*with a reproach*] Chris, this was discussed during the lunch today ...

CHRIS: I see. Actually, I find him a bit strange.

JACK and FRANK [*together*]: Really? Why?

CHRIS: For example, his behaviour during lunches.

FRANK: Does he say 'Thank God' then, as well?

CHRIS: No no, he really behaves in a bizarre way: he talks about his own research.

FRANK: How awful! How could he?

CHRIS: Exactly. So after a couple of lunches with him, I stopped joining him. It's really so difficult to concentrate on food when he starts talking about research. Actually, before you notice he switches to boasting about his work and keeps enumerating the articles in which he was cited. Last time it almost gave me indigestion.

FRANK: That's really terrible. At least when we meet we talk about really important things.

CHRIS and JACK [*together*]: Exactly.

JACK: By the way, do you know? I finally got selected for the program committee of IAI.

FRANK: And why do you say 'finally'?

JACK: They have been excluding me for the past five years. I am sure it's because of this paper I published six years ago in which I showed errors in the work of the founder of this conference series.

FRANK: Come on, Jack, don't be paranoid.

CHRIS: Frank, I rather think that your head is in the clouds. Such things do happen, especially in AI which is full of some cranks and other crazy guys, like for example this fellow Jerry Black from Berkeley.

JACK: Chris, come, come, don't exaggerate, some of the work in AI is really top class. And Black is really a star. [*somewhat taken aback*] I think you forgot what we were talking about: that I got selected to the program committee of IAI.

CHRIS: IAI you said. What's that?

JACK: [*with indignation*] You don't know? The International Conference on AI. The most important conference on AI.

CHRIS: Oh, I thought that IAI is some conference on interior architecture. How silly of me.

FRANK: This reminds me another great story. Some fellow submitted a

phony paper to the annual conference of the architects about how to use footsteps on the wall to enhance people's orientation in space and the paper was accepted with high marks. Then he posted the paper on the web, with the reviews and the letter of acceptance and disclosed that the paper was a joke. Can you imagine the uproar that followed?

CHRIS: Really a great story, ha, ha ha. [*to Jack*] And where is your conference taking place?

JACK: In Detroit.

CHRIS: What bad luck.

FRANK: It's such an ugly town.

CHRIS: They couldn't have chosen a better location? Last year I was at a conference in San Diego. It was great. Close to the beach. And the food was fantastic.

FRANK: And what was the conference about?

CHRIS: Frankly, I did not pay attention to the program. I was on the beach all day. It was just 10 minutes walk from the campus. [*Dreamy. Adds after a while.*] Ah, I remember now, the banquet. It was ridiculous. This big fellow from Amsterdam, what's his name, Willem Jansen, started to chase some female participant from Italy. A pretty woman, I must say. And then he got completely drunk, and you know what? He threw up at the table right in front of the conference chairman. They had to call the police. It was really hilarious.

JACK: Speaking about the program committee chairman, in my case he is from Berkeley, so this at least entitles me to a free trip to the West Coast for the program committee meeting.

FRANK: Congratulations! Now I understand why you were boasting about being on this program committee. [*looks at his watch*] Oops, I am late again for my course. It started 10 minutes ago.

[*They all get up and leave the cafeteria.*]

### **Next day around noon, at Jack's office**

[*Jack kneels on the floor with the scissors and now and then cuts some threads from the carpet. It takes him a couple of minutes. A knock at the door. Jack quickly gets up and with the scissors in his hand opens the door.*]

JACK: Ah, Frank.

FRANK: Doing anything special?

JACK: No, just tidying up my carpet.

FRANK: What for?

JACK: You haven't heard? They placed a new carpet in all the offices on our floor, and now are inspecting which carpet was wrongly put so that it will be done again. I am not going to pack all my books and articles yet again so that they can remove the bookshelves. I would much prefer to improve things myself so that they will consider my carpet as acceptable.

FRANK: And how long have you been busy with it?

JACK: Yesterday a bit and now just half an hour. Why are you asking? But before it I did some useful work: I was looking at the citations of Wilson's articles.

FRANK: You needn't have bothered. I did it yesterday already during this applicant's lecture.

JACK: I noticed you were not there. And?

FRANK: Well, I am amazed how little his work is cited. The last citation I found was to some article from 1980.

JACK: Right, right, I also found that out.

FRANK: So how come he got this honoris causa?

JACK: Well, I don't know. But he seems to be very active in this Association of Sophisticated Systems, or ASS, as they call it.

FRANK: Ha, ha, that's why all the members of this ASS are assholes!

JACK: You are laughing but it's a very influential organisation. Sort of mafia, but in computer science.

FRANK: But he was the president of ASS only at the very beginning, I think.

JACK: Yah, but this way he laid the foundations for his network of contacts.

FRANK: I see, I see. So instead of looking at the impact of his lousy publications, we should check if there is some ASS fellow in Nice. Type in Google 'ASS Nice'.

JACK: How do you spell 'Nice'? N-E-E-C-E?

FRANK: [*sighs*] Oh boy. N-I-C-E!

[*Jack slowly types in all the seven letters. They look intently at the screen.*]

FRANK: Let's see. Click here. Oh boy, it's some porn web site. Look at this! [*reads from the screen*] Pictures of nice asses, great girls.

JACK: Frank, don't be crazy. We shouldn't look at such things in my office. Go back.

FRANK: OK, OK. [*Makes a couple of mouse clicks. Jack gets up. They both look at the screen.*] Look, these all seem to be porn web sites. Actually, this one [*points to the screen*] looks more like an escort service. May I?

JACK: Frank, stop it. How did we reach this place? Oh yah, we were looking for somebody from the ASS association in Nice. And what if we type instead 'Ass, "University of Nice" '?

FRANK: Right, that's better.

[*sits down at Jack's chair and quickly types the text*] Look, look. Click on this link. What's written here? 'Prof. Noir. University of Nice. A Fellow of the Association of Sophisticated Systems'. Yah, now it's all clear to me. I won't be astonished if this Noir visits us in the next few months to give a lecture in the Distinguished Speakers series.

JACK: You mean the one where they pay you two thousand bucks for the lecture? But for this you need the approval from the Dean.

FRANK: Come on, Jack, don't be so naive. Somebody with an honoris causa degree can easily suggest a speaker for this series to the Dean during a cocktail party. And what's this?

[*Points to a fat computer printout at the desk of Jack. Picks it up and reads aloud.*] 'Mastering the Basics of Photography'.

JACK: Nothing special. My wife takes a course on photography and she asked me to print from the web some on-line course that their teacher recommended. But unfortunately, I printed it in a wrong format, so have to do it again. Actually, I don't understand why this went wrong.

FRANK: Let me see. [*lifts the printout and browses through it*] My goodness: it's a whole book, almost 200 pages! Yah, indeed, somehow the lines are too long on each page.

JACK: Exactly. I have been dealing with this for the past hour or so and have no clue how to solve this problem.

FRANK: Well, I have an idea. What if you save it in postscript and then print it with 10% reduction? Then it should be OK.

JACK: That's an idea. I actually tried something else but it did not work and I made another printout for nothing. [*points to his trash bin*]

FRANK: Why don't you print just one or two pages instead of the whole doc?

JACK: Actually, I don't know how to do that.

FRANK: No problem: let me explain. Look, [*points to the computer screen*] you just highlight the pages you want to print here and then click here.

JACK: Thanks. Let me check how it came out.

[*leaves the room to the printer room and returns soon after with the printed page*]

JACK: It came out excellent. Look, even this photo came out well.

FRANK: Now you can print everything in the same mode. Better check if there is enough toner left: the photos take a lot of toner.

JACK: But wait, wait, I have to do it in such a way that Terry's secretary does not see it: the printer is next to her office. So what I do is I print such things only after 5 pm. This printout here is from yesterday.

FRANK: OK, I see. So that is why you sometimes stay till after 5 pm ... And how is your IAI conference going?

JACK: In fact, good that you ask. Yesterday I was busy with it the whole day.

FRANK: You mean with refereeing?

JACK: No, no. Not yet. First we need to resolve an important administrative problem that arose. Namely, the page limit.

FRANK: The page limit?

JACK: Yes. You see, the call for papers mentioned the limit of 15 pages but a few guys submitted papers that were 16 pages long.

FRANK: Does it matter?

JACK: What do you mean? Of course it does. We have one more page to read then. So I sent an email to the whole program committee expressing my concern about this deviation from the rules and suggesting that we reject such papers right away. I did not expect that it would lead to a whole

avalanche of emails. Look here. [*points to the screen*] So far some 45 emails were sent on this issue. Almost everybody on the committee reacted. Some people even commented three times.

FRANK: And how many submissions are 16 pages long?

JACK: Actually, the program committee chairman is away this week, so we have no way of figuring it out on the spot. But fortunately Wolfgang, you know this guy from Oldenburg, spent yesterday the whole day downloading the papers from the conference website and found out that three out of 180 were indeed 16 pages long.

FRANK: So this kept you busy the whole day yesterday?

JACK: Yes, but actually, I spent much less time on all this than Wolfgang. But the discussion is not over yet. Look, here is a new email. Again from this stupid Pole, Kowalski.

FRANK: What's wrong with him?

JACK: He already sent one outrageous email. Look, here is what he wrote yesterday.

[*makes a couple of mouse clicks and points to the screen*]

FRANK: [*Reads aloud. The text appears on a huge screen above the stage.*]:

I am astonished by this discussion. It reminds me a Polish film "Cruise". Its entire action consisted of investigation into which man used women's restroom during a week-long river cruise. Frankly, don't we have better things to do than count the pages?

FRANK: As usual for Poles, some articles are missing.

JACK: Is that all that you have to say about it? Look, not only does he suggest that we should ignore the rules but on top of it he tries to make fun out of it.

FRANK: Let's read his new email.

[*Both look at the screen.*]

FRANK: [*Reads aloud. The text appears on a huge screen above the stage.*]

I prepared a rejection letter to those who submitted too long papers.

Pls comment.

Krzysztof Kowalski

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Dear ...

The Program Committee found that your paper does not meet high standard of our conference in that you (please tick whenever appropriate):

[ ] apparently used small font that shortened your submission to 15 pages,

[ ] used 'wrt' instead of 'with respect to'; after a close analysis the PC found that these changes would lead to 15 and 1/2 pages,

[ ] submitted a paper with odd number of pages and/or longer than 15 pages.

You must be aware that other colleagues did not use such mean tricks.

On behalf of the PC,

the subcommittee on 'Integrity in Science'

JACK: Is this another joke, or does he mean it seriously?

FRANK: Well, it's not clear. And what's PC? A personal computer?

JACK: Come on, Program Committee, you have never been on one?

FRANK: [*ignores the gibe*] Was there any discussion on the odd number of pages?

JACK: Actually, yes. Indirectly. One of the PC members suggested that from now on we mention the limit of 16 pages so that each paper starts on the same side of the proceedings.

FRANK: Oh, I see, so the papers with the odd number of pages would cause problems.

JACK: Exactly. But we cannot enforce this rule this year already.

FRANK: So I think this email must be a joke. You better not reply to it, just in case.



JACK: I think you are right. [*sighing*] And to think that I still have to referee all eighteen papers they assigned to me ...

FRANK: I better leave you with this mess.

JACK: Before you leave. Would you mind refereeing one or two papers?

FRANK: You mean the ones that are 16 pages long?

JACK: No, no, I got only one of these and I shall referee it myself if it's really needed, though I still hope not. I meant the other ones.

FRANK: [*sighing*] Actually, I dropped by to ask if you would like a cup of coffee ... Are the names of the referees mentioned in the proceedings?

JACK: Sure, sure, we need to send the lists of referees. The chairman will collate them and publish the complete list at the end of the proceedings.

FRANK: OK then. I shall take one paper to review. When is it due?

[*Leaves Jack's office without waiting for a reply. Jack returns to his computer. Now and then clicks the mouse and looks at the screen. After a couple of minutes a soft knock to the door.*]

JACK: Come in.

[*A young Indian fellow enters the office and stands politely in front of Jack.*]

JACK: [*courteously*] Please, please. Nice to meet you. Your name is Kumar, right? Please sit down. I really liked your talk yesterday, Dr. Kumar. It's a pity that so few people could attend. But at least those who came were impressed by your results.

KUMAR: Well, except this fellow who was sleeping in the first row.

JACK: Ah yes, Chris. Please don't be bothered by him. He had just returned from Europe and had jet lag. How long are you staying in town?

KUMAR: Till tomorrow morning. I have already had two discussions with other members of your Department and was really looking forward to meeting you.

JACK: [*nicely surprised*] And why?

KUMAR: Well, I looked into your home page before coming here and really liked this statement 'I read all my publications'.

JACK: [*a bit disappointed*] Oh, I see ...

KUMAR: Actually, you would be surprised, but many students in our Department were impressed by your declaration.

JACK: [*brightening up*] And why is that?

KUMAR: Because you see, at our place it is somewhat different. I for example wrote a couple of papers with my supervisor.

JACK: Jerry Black, am I right? He really is a star. And? Didn't he read your joint papers?

KUMAR: Well, it's kind of complicated. He took my manuscript once and did not return it for three months, until I reminded him. So he finally gave it back to me and said that it's OK and that the proof is neat. So we submitted it as a joint article to a conference and it got accepted.

JACK: So what's the problem?

KUMAR: Well, you see, a couple of months later he asked a question during a talk and our paper contained the answer. In fact, the answer was already stated in the abstract on page 1. The rest of the paper was devoted to a non-trivial proof of it. So I assume he could not have read it.

JACK: Oh, I see. I am sorry to hear this. You see, [*switches to a solemn voice*] I consider scientific integrity as one of the most important elements of science and have devoted practically my whole career to promoting this view of science, especially among a younger generation, like you.

KUMAR: That is precisely why I admire the statement in your homepage.

JACK: Let's see. Let me take you for a dinner tonight. Please don't protest, it's paid by the Department.

KUMAR: It's very kind of you. So how shall we meet? I am staying in the Western Union hotel, downtown.

[*Somebody knocks at the door.*]

JACK: Come in!

[*Frank enters Jack's office.*]

FRANK: Jack, I forgot to ask you. For when is this review for your conference?

JACK: May 15. Let me introduce you. This is Dr Kumar from Berkeley who has applied for a postdoc position in our Department. We were just discussing the dinner arrangements. Would you like to join us perhaps?

FRANK: Dr. Kumar, I am really sorry I could not come to your lecture

yesterday. I had some pressing duties. I understand that you gave a brilliant lecture.

KUMAR: [*gets up*] Thank you Sir.

FRANK: Let's see Jack. And is this covered by the Department?

JACK: Actually, I don't know. Let me call Terry's secretary.

[*picks up the phone and talks to somebody*]

FRANK: [*to Kumar*] So your area is AI?

KUMAR: Right Sir. I got a PhD with Professor Black.

FRANK: Black? Never heard of him.

KUMAR: [*taken aback*] Well, he got the Babbage award last year for his work on inconsistent logics for one-dimensional robotics.

FRANK: [*pretending he forgot*] Oh yah, yes, yes, I remember now.

JACK: [*puts down the phone and joins Frank and Kumar*] Sorry Frank. She said that according to the new rules only one person from the Department can go out for a dinner with a postdoc applicant.

FRANK: But it's scandalous! Who introduced such an outrageous rule?

JACK: Terry, of course.

FRANK: In that case, sorry, gentlemen, I won't be able to join you. Dr Kumar, I am going home for lunch. I hope you will accept our offer.

KUMAR: But I have not yet been made an offer.

FRANK: Right, right. I mean, if you are made one.

KUMAR: [*shifts to a cynical voice*] I shall certainly consider it very carefully. [*after a pause*] I mean, if I am made one.

[*Frank turns and leaves Jack's office.*]

### **A week later, at Jack's office**

[*Jack sits behind his computer and types something from a document lying on the desk, very slowly, with two fingers, occasionally yawning. A phone call.*]

JACK: Oh, hi, darling. What's up? [*listens attentively*] Oh no! What a mess! How did he do this? Again!

[*after a short break*] Well, I don't know if I can still manage today.

[*after another short break, impatiently*] I know, I know, it's Friday today. OK, let me see. Bye.

[*puts down the phone and immediately calls somebody*] Frank? Do you have a moment? My wife just called to tell me that this idiot child of Wilson spilled apple juice on this booklet on photography that I printed for her. I don't remember how you set up the parameters for printing anymore. Would you mind coming over? I really need to print it still today.

[*Returns to computer and resumes his laboriously slow typing. After a couple of minutes a knock at the door.*]

JACK: Frank, come in, come in. Sorry to disturb you, I completely forgot how it's done.

FRANK: No problem. Will be happy to help again. How come Wilson's son is at your home?

JACK: Exactly. Wilson left with his wife for Nice yesterday and they arranged behind my back that their son stays at our place while they are away.

FRANK: Really, that's amazing. How did he do this?

JACK: Well, actually his wife called Mary and discussed it with her. And since Adam often plays with their son at school, once Adam overheard what they were talking about he forced Mary into accepting it.

FRANK: So their son is staying at your home now. Interesting ...

JACK: Not only that. When Wilson's wife dropped him off, she handed Mary some envelope for me from Wilson. When I opened it I found an article of Wilson's from 1980 with a letter from him. He wrote something like

Here is this famous article of mine I was mentioning to you the other day. It became a stepping stone in my career and now brings me to Nice. Please remember that Daniel should not drink after dinner, since he occasionally still pisses in his bed. Thanks. Jeremy.

Isn't it outrageous?

FRANK: And now he has spilled apple juice.

JACK: Worse! Wilson warned me, and sure enough it happened last night. I had to change all the linen, at 4am. Can you imagine?

FRANK: Perhaps you did give him a drink after dinner.

[*Jack looks furiously at Frank. Does not reply.*]

FRANK: [*points all of a sudden at the document lying on Jack's desk*]  
What's this article?

JACK: This? Oh, it's an old paper of mine. I have to retype it.

FRANK: Retype? Why?

JACK: Well, I submitted it to a journal almost two years ago and finally got the referee reports. It is accepted subject to a thorough revision. But in the meantime I lost the file. At least, I tried to find it last week and could not. So [*with a sigh*] I have to retype it from the only hard copy I eventually found. [*points to a terrible mess on his floor, where the papers lie in several piles*]

FRANK: Oh boy. How come you lost a file? Did you delete it?

JACK: No, no. I really don't understand it. I was sure I kept it in the 2001 folder. But it was not there.

FRANK: And did you try advanced search?

JACK: What's that?

FRANK: I mean, did you try to look for all the files that contain a specific word?

JACK: No, I didn't. In fact, I did not know it can be done.

FRANK: Let me show you then. Mention some atypical word you used in your article.

JACK: Let's see. [*looks into his paper*] ... OK ... For example 'incestuous'.

FRANK: What??? A strange word in an article in computer science.

JACK: Doesn't matter. So what do you do next?

FRANK: Look, click here, now type this word here. Yes, like this [*Frank is slowly typing*], and now click the ENTER key.

[*They both look attentively at the screen. A minute passes by.*]

FRANK: [*all of a sudden*] You see? Here it is.

JACK: Can't be! But this is the folder with the files from 2002! How could this happen? Oh, my goodness, I know now. I added one reference to the paper last year and moved it then to the 2002 folder. How stupid of me!

FRANK: You don't need to bother with this retyping now. Anyway, I assume you have not spent much time on it so far?

JACK: Actually, you are wrong. I have been busy with this almost the whole week. I still had 2 pages to finish.

FRANK: And how long is the article?

JACK: Just 16 pages. But I type pretty slow.

FRANK: [*with amazement*] I see. Jack, I really think you should eventually become computer literate. So let's get back now to this manual you wanted to print. [*leans over the computer screen*]

### **Two months later, early afternoon, in the cafeteria**

[*Jack and Frank sit at a simple table and drink coffee. Next to them two other, empty tables, with, probably empty, plastic cups and an empty Coca Cola can.* ]

JACK: Thanks again for your review. It was a bit meager though, just three lines.

FRANK: Well, I do believe that it's enough: I really did not have much time and stopped reading after page 4.

JACK: No problem, no problem: I just passed it to the PC chairman.

FRANK: And don't forget to pass my name as a referee, as well. OK? And how many reviews did you have to do?

JACK: Eighteen, or so.

FRANK: Wow, that's a lot! It must have been a lot of work!

JACK: Actually, I did not spend that much time on it: I only distributed the papers to the referees, and as you recall only had to send the reminders.

FRANK: Speaking about your reminder. Do you realise that you sent it by mistake to the whole Department instead of only to me? Thank God there was nothing personal in your email.

JACK: Oh, my goodness! How could it happen?

FRANK: Easy. You just replied to my email yesterday to the whole Department about joining forces and buying this Californian wine with a substantial discount and you clicked the 'reply all' button instead of 'reply'.

JACK: Well, this way at least Terry will know that I finally got on the PC of this conference. He has been teasing me about it for the past few years.

FRANK: I am not sure he read it. Your email still had ‘good wine for less money’ in the subject line. And did you get all the reports on time?

JACK: Only one is still missing. It is from this Romanian PhD student, Gabriel, who just started here two months ago.

FRANK: I actually heard that he is sick. I think depression. Some admin person told me that he was overworked.

JACK: Good that you tell me. I might still try to reassign his paper to this other PhD student, who wrote three very detailed reports. He will certainly deliver.

FRANK: Three reports? A PhD student? And how many did you do yourself?

JACK: I told you already that I just distributed the papers, I mean, all eighteen papers, to the referees.

FRANK: What? So you did not referee anything yourself?

JACK: [*with a shrug*] Why should I? This is a job of the referees and not of the program committee members. In any case, the PC chairman wanted all the reports by May 15 and I delivered all of them on time except the one by this Gabriel.

FRANK: But you did at least read these reports before sending them?

JACK: Come on, Frank, I don’t have much time now: I am struggling with the revision of this paper of mine. The referees wanted a better motivation and complete proofs, not the sketches. I still have to figure out what I meant by some things I wrote two years ago. Anyway, have to go back to my office now.

[*Gets up, goes to the door and leaves. In the door.*] Oh, I forgot, this Californian wine. Is it really so good?

### **The same afternoon, in a student canteen**

[*Jin Song and another student finish eating lunch sitting at a simple table. Around them other tables, with abandoned trays with plastic plates and cups. In the background noises from the kitchen and of several conversations. Oc-*

*asionally one can hear a noise of an old fashioned cash register and a loud voice of a cashier stating a price to the next customer.]*

The other student: [*gets up*] Jin Song, coffee?

JIN SONG: Yes. Thanks Gabriel.

*[After a couple of minutes Gabriel returns with two cups of coffee.]*

JIN SONG: So are you still in hiding?

GABRIEL: Still for two days. Then the deadline is over.

JIN SONG: You are lucky that the administration does not check who comes to the student canteen. They really deserve it, idiots.

GABRIEL: Actually, I don't think that Jack Roberts is an idiot. In contrast to other profs in the Department he was realistic and gave me only one paper to referee, and in my area. But the others don't even care whether the submissions are in your area. All they want is that you write these referee reports, no matter what nonsense you write in them.

JIN SONG: So why didn't you write this one? One paper to referee, it's not that much.

GABRIEL: The problem is that I lost it. I think I left it in our lab and somebody must have thrown it away. So I did not dare tell Roberts about it.

JIN SONG: But such things happen all the time! I still remember when the chairman sent an email to the whole Department and all the PhD students that he had misplaced a confidential submission to a conference. For security reasons he did not want to mention the title of the paper but he added that the first page had spilled coffee marks on it. So this way we could quickly find it: he left it in the loo.

GABRIEL: Anyway, better coffee than the stains from a wine glass. Ah, by the way. Did you read this email about cheap wine? What was it?

JIN SONG: Ah, it was from one of our professors who likes wine a lot. So to save on his expenses he suggests each year that we all buy wine together in bigger quantities and cut down on the price.

GABRIEL: Strange that professors send such emails.

JIN SONG: You will get used to many strange things in this Department. Actually, this guy, Frank Schultz, got famous a couple of years ago by giving a talk during a conference while completely drunk. Apparently, the chairman



of the session stopped his talk after most of the people left the room in disgust.

GABRIEL: Sort of, like stopping a boxer's fight due to a technical knock-out.

JIN SONG: The only difference is that in the case of conferences people pay to learn something new about science and not about human behaviour.

GABRIEL: [*Finishes his coffee. Changes topic.*] So your PhD thesis has been approved.

JIN SONG: Yes, it was just a formality really. My supervisor chose as external referee his friend from the time of his studies in Austin. Then he told me to write myself a report on my thesis and emailed it with not a single word changed to this friend. And then this friend submitted it as his own report on my thesis, with his signature. Of course our Department paid him duly for this report.

GABRIEL: And nobody figured out that you wrote this report?

JIN SONG: No, only Wilson was wondering why a native American made such grammatical mistakes.

GABRIEL: And who had to write the internal report?

JIN SONG: Wilson, but he always writes some vague reports in which he simply rephrases the abstract that you have to submit to him separately. When I went to his office two months ago to get his opinion on the original version, he only commented on the chapter headings. Then I knew I was safe. And, the idiot, he marked every page heading to indicate that only the first word should be in capital. He went like this through all 200 pages! It took me exactly one minute to fix it, just modifying the chapter titles. He does not know that the page headings are generated automatically from the chapter titles.

GABRIEL: And your supervisor? Was he helpful? Should I choose him?

JIN SONG: You mean Chris Anderson? Well, he is very good with computers and text processing. He knows how to add all the whistles and bells to various documents. For example, he spent two weeks once to create a font matching the handwriting of the chairman and as a joke printed an announcement in this font that from now on one does not need to flush the toilets anymore, with the name and signature of the chairman at the bottom. We learned about it from a student girl who was Chris's lover at the time

since he asked her to put these announcements in the women's restrooms. By the way, if you want to know, there she is. The one with the red hair. [*points discreetly at somebody in the canteen*] Kathy Rees. An eternal PhD student. Apparently, she is now having an affair with Wilson.

GABRIEL: What? All this is too much for me to take.

[*after a while, subdued*] But I meant, as a supervisor. Was Anderson good? Did he help you?

JIN SONG: You must be joking. He is a nice chap, that's why I chose him. But he stopped doing research some ten years ago. The topic I chose was actually proposed to me by my professor in China, where we had no computer resources to run all the experiments.

GABRIEL: And Terry Warren, the chairman? Perhaps I should choose him as a supervisor?

JIN SONG: Come on. He got famous by organising the summer courses in a great hotel in Maine, right at the sea shore. Each year he invites a bunch of well-known computer scientists from all over the world and puts together an impressive two weeks course. And then, since he is always mentioned on the top, as an organiser, people got used to see his name in the presence of the names of computer science celebrities. So now people think that he is a great scientist, too. But everything is arranged by his secretary, Jacky, who is an excellent organiser. He only provides her with the lecturer's names. And during the course he opens the whole thing and then disappears to his fishing boat on which he gives evening cruises for the lecturers. No wonder that afterwards they write him emails praising the course to high heaven from which he quotes when inviting a new bunch of speakers the following year.

And, don't tell me you did not see his masterpiece from last year. I mean the paper in the conference proceedings in which by mistake he left running comments to his co-author student such as 'Remove this paragraph. I think it's not true.' or 'Add some citations to my papers here.' and so on.

GABRIEL: Well, at least it shows that he read that paper.

JIN SONG: You mean, tried to understand. You know how it happened? This student submitted this paper a couple of times to a conference but it was always rejected. So he had a brilliant idea. He approached Warren and asked him to be a coauthor hoping that Warren would do the rest. After they submitted the paper Warren apparently tried to understand it and then called the program committee chairman to explain how important this

paper was and why it should be accepted. I think this chairman was one of the lecturers at his summer school. So once it was accepted Warren wanted to send the final version himself to show that he was involved. But he forgot to remove his comments to the student from the file and they remained in the paper.

*[resumes drinking his coffee]*

GABRIEL: In that case I think I shall choose Roberts. He at least put in his homepage a statement 'I read all my publications'.

JIN SONG: Don't know him. Anyway, I don't care anymore. I am defending my PhD thesis next week and already have a job in the Bay area. The company promised to arrange my visa and working permit.

GABRIEL: Lucky you. I still have to survive here for three more years.

JIN SONG: Don't worry. Just get in touch with your professor in Romania and ask for a topic. And you can always choose my supervisor. Anderson actually can be quite funny. I recall some time ago he wrote some ridiculous theater play about University professors. Unfortunately, after one performance by the students from the Faculty of Arts it was discontinued, because the Dean judged the play as too scandalous.

*[The curtain.]* End of act I.

*Act II*

**A week later, around 7 pm, at Jack's house**

[*Jack opens the front door and enters.*]

JACK: Hi darling!

MARY: How was your day?

JACK: So so. Will tell you later. Ah, before I forget. I printed Adam's homework for the school, in colour. Look. [*takes out a document from his briefcase and shows it to Mary*] It came out well, hasn't it?

MARY: [*looks at the printout*] Indeed, excellent colours.

JACK: And here is this printout for you. [*hands her some heavy envelope*]

MARY: [*picks it up, opens it and browses through the printout*] Thanks Jack. Really beautiful photo's. Great that finally you printed it in colour.

JACK: Yes, but there is one small problem. I did not know how to add paper to this printer, so could not print the last 10 pages; I think the ones starting from page 255.

MARY: [*disappointed*] What a pity. Perhaps you should get around to installing the colour printer you brought from work a couple of days ago? I know, I know, the toner and the paper will not be for free anymore then.

JACK: Surely not. Printing in colour is much more expensive. Normally, we are allowed to print in colour only if the documents are for funding agencies, so that they think we do some important research.

MARY: Oh, I see. So today I am your funding agency. [*approaches Jack and gives him a kiss*]

JACK: [*after a couple of moments*] Now, returning to this printer. Unfortunately, I spent a useless night yesterday. I really have no clue how to connect it to our computer. But I could ask Frank to come over and help. He is such a computer wizard.

MARY: Yes, but then we would have to invite him for dinner and he always gets so drunk. For example last time at the party at the Faculty club on the occasion of Wilson's honorary degree. It was so embarrassing. You remember? At a certain moment he literally fell under the table. Thank God, your Dean had already left by then.

[*changes the topic*] By the way, why are you so sure that they will not find out that you took this printer home?

JACK: Don't worry. They told us last week that they lost the inventory list of the computer equipment and that they need to reconstruct it. As soon as I heard that I took this lab printer home. Anyway, there were two printers there and this one had hardly ever been used. It was in the evening so nobody saw it. As I predicted, they are now laboriously reconstructing the inventory list by asking everybody to provide details. So I simply provided information that I have such and such a computer and such and such a printer at home.

MARY: [*again changes the topic*] Jack, I wanted to talk to you about this conference of yours. Do you think we could join you for this trip to Berkeley? It would be great if Adam could see it. He has never been to the West Coast.

JACK: Well, you realise that such a trip won't be cheap.

MARY: I'm aware of this. But we could at least charge the room and perhaps even the meals to your Department? You remember your conference last year in Washington D.C.? Adam profitted so much from that trip! He was talking about the Museum of Science for the whole next month. And you also hardly had to attend the conference, only the banquet.

JACK: Will have to check it out. You see, this is a program committee meeting and not a conference. Also, they have a new control system in place and the administration now carefully checks all the bills, like what type of room you reserved, single or double, and so on.

MARY: It's really irritating. They are really making it more and more difficult for us to travel at the cost of the Department.

JACK: I know, I know. It has really become such a nuisance working at this Department.

[*adds in a grave tone*] Moreover, I am not so sure whether I want to go to this meeting anymore.

MARY: Why? What happened?

JACK: You see, when the chairman of the program committee, Black, suggested that I join his program committee he also asked me to arrange a position at our Department for a young Indian fellow who just got a PhD with him. But this SOB Wilson blocked my proposal today and we shall not be extending an offer to this Indian. Nowadays it's not easy to get a position if you have a PhD in AI. So I really don't know what to say to Black when I see him. I am now considering canceling my trip and staying home.

MARY: That's really a shame. Wilson is a nasty piece of work.

JACK: My only consolation now is this Romanian student, Gabriel. I scooped him from Wilson. Wilson was not amused when he heard that Gabriel switched and now wants to write his PhD thesis with me. This will at least teach Wilson that he had better watch out. I am seeing this Gabriel tomorrow.

[*A door to the living room from a bedroom opens. Adam enters.*]

ADAM: Oh, hi Dad. Why so late again? And, hey Dad, did you finally copy these games for me?

JACK: Adam, I was really too busy today. I shall do it tomorrow, OK?

ADAM: Dad, but you promised! And I have to return all these CD's to Daniel.

JACK: To whom did you say?

ADAM: To Daniel Wilson. All 5 games are from him. He agreed that I borrow them from him for 3 days so that you could copy them and he needs them back tomorrow.

JACK: Sorry Adam. It didn't work out. I can't help it. If you want you can call him and tell him that you will return them one day late.

ADAM: Dad, Dad, I have an idea. Why don't you return these CD's —after having copied them of course— to his father at work tomorrow? Then he will still have them back on time.

JACK: Me, return pirated CD's to his Dad? No way. Over my dead body.

### **Next day, late morning, at Jack's office**

[*Jack sits in his chair and reads some document. Somebody knocks at the door.*]

FRANK: Come in!

[*Chris enters Jack's office.*]

CHRIS: Jack, may I? Am I disturbing you?

JACK: No, no, actually, good that you came. I am reading some awfully boring Master's thesis Terry pushed onto me. Actually, I'm late with it. So what brought you here?

CHRIS: Jack, I wanted to tell you something in confidence and ask for advice.

JACK: [*in a solemn voice*] Chris, you can be sure that I shall keep things to myself.

CHRIS: [*lowering his voice*] You see, I'm writing a theater play.

JACK: What? But you have written one already. And, I recall, it was not much of a success.

CHRIS: [*taken aback*] I think you are completely wrong. Actually, that play was a big success and the students liked it very much. The only problem was that our Dean did not like it and ordered the Faculty of Arts to discontinue it after the first show.

JACK: He must have had a reason.

CHRIS: Have you actually seen this play?

JACK: Me? No.

CHRIS: If you had, you would understand better what happened. It played to a full house.

JACK: Full house you say. Chris, let's be realistic: you can only fit 50 chairs into the hall in the Students Union.

CHRIS: Don't exaggerate. It was more. And the Dean came, as well. Unfortunately, he ordered us to stop the performances because of one too daring scene.

JACK: [*with an interest*] I'm curious to know what this scene was about.

CHRIS: Well, the scene showed an attractive student girl doing a striptease in a professor's office to get a better grade. Students liked this scene very much, but the Dean apparently not. Afterward I actually proposed to the Dean—I have to admit with great reluctance—to drop this scene altogether but he would not change his decision. He also said that I was actually lucky that the Provost was not there.

JACK: So now you are busy with a less daring play?

CHRIS: Actually, this new play will be based on my experiences in our Department.

JACK: [*completely surprised*] What? You better be careful. Washing dirty laundry in public is not the best way to advance your career.

CHRIS: Don't worry, I completely changed the names and the setting and hope nobody will understand where I got all these ideas from.

JACK: Chris, why don't you move on to writing opera's, or even better, start doing research? It may be more beneficial for you in the long run.

CHRIS: [*offended*] Jack, I think I had better leave.

JACK: Sorry Chris, did not want to be rude. Just thought you better realise that what you are doing is walking on a thin line.

CHRIS: Sure, sure, don't worry. If I do something I want to do it right. Actually, for the purposes of this play I have been doing quite a lot of meticulous research and am almost ready with it.

JACK: What about?

CHRIS: [*in a confidential voice*] I'll tell you once I'm ready.

JACK: So what did you want to get a piece of advice about from me?

CHRIS: You see, I have actually already written most of the play and now need somebody to read it and judge if the dialogue runs well, and so on. [*hands Jack a large envelope*]

JACK: And to check if anyone can recognise the main characters?

CHRIS: For example.

JACK: Look, Chris, I can do this, but frankly, I'm not sure that what you are doing is wise. [*puts the envelope in his briefcase*] When do you want it back?

CHRIS: Up to you. The sooner the better.

JACK: I'll try to do it today. This Master's thesis can wait.

[*A knock at the door. Jack looks at his watch.*]

JACK: Eleven o'clock. It must be the Romanian student.

### **An hour later, at Jack's office**

JACK: [*on the phone*] Frank, are you free now? Please come by. I have to tell you something important.

[*A couple of minutes later. A knock at the door.*]

JACK: Come in!



FRANK: [*enters*] Hi Jack. Before I forget. I copied four of these games but have a problem with the fifth one. It's copy protected and I cannot figure out how to get around it.

JACK: No problem. I actually wanted to tell you something really important I just learned.

FRANK: [*with an interest*] And it is?

JACK: Sit down. Listen to this. The Romanian student, Gabriel, was just here and he told me that the PhD student, Kathy Rees, is having an affair with Wilson.

FRANK: Can't be! How does he know it?

JACK: He learned it from another student.

FRANK: Wow. That's big news. Shall we post it on the Department Electronic Bulletin Board?

JACK: Are you kidding? But do you agree with me that this is scandalous?

FRANK: Tsja, scandalous, scandalous. Actually, I suppose so, when you think of it. So she broke with Chris?

JACK: How did you know about them?

FRANK: Me? Everybody knows this. But you also seem to know about her and Chris.

JACK: Yes, I also just learned that from the Romanian student.

FRANK: But wait a moment. She is Wilson's PhD student, am I right?

JACK: Exactly. That's the point. Listen, I can't leave at this. Wilson blocks whatever I propose. Take for instance the Departmental meeting yesterday. He said that this nice Indian, Kumar, from Berkeley is not good and forced everybody into accepting some obscure postdoc from Nice who works in his area. And to think that his 'brilliant candidate' wrote in his curriculum vitae: 'Languages, French: mother tongue, English: learning', with the word 'tongue' misspelled. So he still has to master English!

FRANK: True, it was really shameful. But Terry seconded it and after that it was hopeless. I told you that once Wilson got his honorary degree he would probably have to do something in return sooner or later.

JACK: Frank, listen, how can we prove that Wilson is having an affair with

this Kathy? If we have some evidence, I can confront Wilson and force him to withdraw his proposal of a postdoc from Nice.

FRANK: Well, it won't be easy. You need some hard proof and not gossip. In the case of Chris the affair went on for 10 months and even though some people knew about it there was never an uproar about it.

JACK: OK, but Chris is divorced and Wilson is married. Moreover, Wilson, as you know, is the crown jewel of our Department while Chris is a liability.

FRANK: Let me see. [*thinks a bit and after a couple of seconds approaches Jack's computer*] May I?

JACK: Sure.

FRANK: Let's see. [*sits down, types something and looks at the screen*] Here she is.

JACK: Yes, I looked already. She has no homepage.

FRANK: Yes, yes, I'm looking into her account.

JACK: And?

FRANK: Damn, everything is protected. I can't see anything.

JACK: Well, you might be right. It won't be easy to prove it. But I really hate Wilson. He will slip through the net again.

FRANK: Will still think what I can do. [*looks at his watch*] Have to go. My course started 5 minutes ago. [*looks at Jack's desk*] What's this? [*points at a document*]

JACK: This? A Master's thesis of one of our students. Terry asked me to look into it and write the internal report. Actually, he irritated me no end.

FRANK: Why?

JACK: First he passed it to me and said that I need to write the report within two weeks. Then, two weeks later, when I was almost ready with it, he came to my office and said that he forgot to tell me that the student had actually found some serious errors in the meantime and that he now has a completely different version of his thesis, in which he actually proves the reverse results. So I did all this work for nothing and now have to study his thesis again.

FRANK: And did you discover these errors yourself?

JACK: You must be joking. Nobody reads theses at such a level.

FRANK: May I see? [*picks up the thesis and reads the cover*] 'Relation between multimedia and databases', Stuart Rose. I know this guy. Let's see. [*starts browsing it*] Bastard! I told him to cite my paper from 1988! He did not do it.

JACK: From 1988? But there were no multimedia then!

FRANK: Doesn't matter. But it was on databases. Terry claimed that my work has no impact anymore so I told Rose that he needs to cite my last publication. The topic was unrelated, true, but does it really matter? Ah, something else. Any plans already for your vacation?

JACK: Don't know yet. Mary wants to visit her aunt in Scotland, so I submitted a paper to some lousy conference there. It should get accepted. This way at least my travel costs will be paid by the Department. But I don't have confirmation yet. Anyway, we planned to go all together and stay with Adam in the same room. But now, have you read these new regulations issued by Terry? About the travel expenses and types of rooms during the conferences?

FRANK: Yah, I heard. Shameful. I heard it's because he discovered that Chris was traveling to this San Diego conference with Kathy Rees and charged everything, including the meals, to the Department.

JACK: Chris? How could he? At the cost of the Department? It's a scandal. I was wondering how come he got to travel there. He has not published anything for years!

FRANK: True. But it was some conference on education and for such conferences each Department has to send somebody. So Chris volunteered. [*looks at his watch*] Oops, I forgot, I am late for my course.

JACK: Just a sec Frank. I also forgot something. I accidentally deleted your email about the Californian wine in which you mentioned the prices. Mary is interested. Can you send me the details again?

### **3 hours later, at Jack's office**

[*A knock at the door*]

JACK: Come in!

[*Frank enters waving a piece of paper.*]

JACK: What's this?

FRANK: Proof!

JACK: Of what?

FRANK: Read. [*He hands the paper to Jack. Jack reads aloud. The text appears on a huge screen above the stage.*]

Date: Mon, May 26, 2003, 13:34

From: <Kathy Rees> kathyr

To : <Jeremy Wilson> jeremy

Subject: Freudian slip

Just put on new underwear with 'Freudian' written on it.  
Have to show it to you. Now.

K.

JACK: Incredible! How did you find this?

FRANK: Easy. Cracked into her account.

JACK: What??? How could you?

FRANK: What do you mean? You were looking for hard proof. Now you've got it, from a hard disk.

JACK: [*gasping*] But I did not have in mind breaking into somebody's account! How shall I explain to anybody how I got this email?

FRANK: Does it really matter? You can always say that you found it on the floor or in a trash bin. Anyway, you certainly have proof in her style now. Do you remember how she was dressed during the picnic with the PhD students? With a T-shirt with one word on it: 'Lick'. When I saw it, I almost fell over.

JACK: [*looking again into the email printout*] Look! It was sent yesterday, just before our Department meeting about the applicants. Wilson was there.

FRANK: This does not mean anything.

JACK: You really put me in a difficult position.

FRANK: But how else do you want to prove that they are having an affair? You want a photograph?

JACK: Frank, I really have to think this over.

FRANK: [*getting up, ready to leave Jack's office*] Your choice. And better be sure that nobody breaks into your account ...

[*A knock at the door. Jack and Frank react as if they have been caught in something illegal.*]

JACK: Come in!

[*Chris enters waving a piece of paper.*]

CHRIS: Eureka! After six months research I finally got it! And it was so simple!

[*Jack and Frank look at each other.*]

JACK: What are you talking about?

FRANK: Chris, don't tell me you resumed research. I won't buy it.

CHRIS: [*ignoring the gibe*] Guys, you won't believe it. For six months I have been wondering how come Terry can afford an expensive boat, you know the one he keeps in Maine. After all, his company went broke right at the beginning, six years ago, and he did not earn anything on it. And he did not get married into the DuPont family either.

FRANK: To be more precise, he is now actually involved in a divorce. You better start your research by gathering some facts.

CHRIS: Really? They are divorcing?

FRANK: You did not know about it? Boo ... What a bad researcher you are.

CHRIS: Anyway, listen to this. It has kept me busy, as I said, for six months and I have now solved it. [*waves again the piece of paper*]

JACK: What is it?

CHRIS: Look. [*shows it to Frank and Jack*]

JACK: [*reading aloud*] Compensation for the editorial work for the 'Advances in Computer Science' journal, \$ 25.000. Paid to Terry Warren. April 30, 2003.

FRANK: Where did you get it from?

CHRIS: Simple. I picked it up from Jacky's desk.

JACK and FRANK: [*together*] What? Are you nuts?

CHRIS: Not at all. I went to ask Terry about these new ridiculous travel

regulations and while I was leaving his office I saw it lying on the top of Jacky's desk. She was not there, so I picked it up. Simple, eh? She opens all his correspondence first and only then deals with it. So late in the morning her desk looks very messy. She will never notice.

JACK: It's insane. So you grabbed it from her desk?

CHRIS: Come on Frank, you behave as if I broke into somebody's account. [*John and Frank exchange looks.*] I did not steal anything: Terry will get his dole. And I shall put this letter into her mailbox. She won't figure out why it ended up there. Anyway, what do you think of it guys? 25 K per year. Not bad, eh? It's more than one third of my annual salary.

FRANK: So they pay so much for editorial work?

CHRIS: I had heard of this before. There was actually an article on it in the Notices of the American Mathematical Society three years ago, but the figures were not confirmed. Now I have hard proof. So Terry has been getting this nice supplement every year since he founded his journal, when was it?

FRANK: I think fifteen years ago.

CHRIS: [*resumes*] That means, if he founded his journal fifteen years ago, ... then it's all clear to me! Look, this boat of his costs, say, 200 thousand and he bought it about eight years ago ... I also found out that the chairmanship brings him another fifteen K per year. It all fits.

FRANK: So this was the subject of your research.

CHRIS: [*proudly*] Yah. And I really feel wiser now.

FRANK: I don't think that Terry will offer you a salary increase for this type of research.

### **Late evening, at Jack's house**

[*Jack and Mary sit and drink tea together. She reads a newspaper. He is deep in thought.*]

MARY: [*without interrupting her reading*] Ah, Jack, Daniel Wilson was here today and played with our Adam.

JACK: I hope he did not spill anything this time.

MARY: Thank God, no. But he was asking why you still have not finished copying his games.

JACK: This kid is really working on my nerves.

MARY: Ah, I would have forgotten. When Nancy came to collect him, she brought something for you from Wilson. I put it there. [*points to a cupboard*]

JACK: [*Walks to the cupboard and collects the document. Reads aloud.*] Jack, this is the last version of my new article. Hope you did not start reading the version I gave you last week. Please throw it away as there were some errors in it.

[*walks towards the trash bin and angrily throws the article into it*]

MARY: [*astonished*] I think he asked you to throw away the previous version, not this one, am I right?

JACK: Don't worry. I know him well enough. In two days he will ask me to throw away this version.

[*Mary does not react. Resumes reading the newspaper.*]

JACK: [*scratching his head, in an official tone*] Mary, I wanted to ask you something really important.

MARY: Yes?

JACK: Have you ever seen women's underwear of the make 'Freudian'?

MARY: [*completely surprised*] What a strange question! Why do you ask?

JACK: You see, it is of utmost relevance for my work. [*takes a deep breath*] Let me explain.

### **Next day morning, in Chairman's office**

[*Jack and Terry sit opposite each other.*]

JACK: Terry, the reason I wanted to see you, is to express my disappointment about the way we take decisions in our Department. Take for instance the way we decided about the vacancy for a postdoc position. It's obvious that Kumar is way above Wilson's candidate.

TERRY: [*interrupting, in a formal tone*] Jack, I agreed to see you at such short notice because you wanted to talk about some urgent matter. I don't find this is an urgent matter at all. We took a decision yesterday, there is no new information about the candidates and we have to move forward.

JACK: No new information about the candidates, indeed. But there is new information about those who proposed the candidates.

TERRY: What do you mean?

JACK: I mean Wilson.

TERRY: [*impatiently*] Come on, Jack, you did not come here to talk about Wilson?

JACK: [*firmly*] Yes, I did. He is creating a situation that puts our Department into disrepute.

TERRY: [*with disbelief, formally*] What situation?

JACK: He is having an affair with his PhD student. If you recall the University regulations, this is strictly unacceptable.

TERRY: You must be joking Jack. How can you say such a thing?

JACK: I have proof, hard proof.

TERRY: [*sceptically*] Proof?

JACK: Yes, here it is. [*takes a piece of paper out of his pocket and hands it to Terry*]

TERRY: [*slowly reads the paper*] Can't be. How did you get it?

JACK: Doesn't matter.

TERRY: [*walks silently across his office and after a minute picks up the phone*] Jacky, can you please call Professor Wilson and ask him to come to my office, as soon as possible.

[*Terry and Jack sit silently, each looking in a different direction. The telephone rings. Terry picks it up.*]

TERRY: Thank you Jacky. [*puts down the phone*] He is on his way.

[*They sit silently for two more minutes avoiding each others eyes. A knock at the door.*]

TERRY: Come in!

[*The door opens. Wilson enters. Looks with astonishment at Jack.*]

TERRY: Hi Jeremy. Please sit down. How are you?

WILSON: Fine. Why do you ask? [*looks again at Jack*]



TERRY: Jeremy, the reason I asked you to come here is to discuss a certain email.

WILSON: An email? What do you mean?

TERRY: [*hands him the piece of paper he got from Jack*] Here it is.

WILSON: [*Starts reading. Taken aback.*] What's this? Outrageous! Is this an April Fool's Day joke or what? And why do you give it to me in front of Jack?

JACK: I just handed it to Terry.

WILSON: What do you mean? Did you concoct it?

JACK: No, not at all. Somebody gave it to me. And I can vouch that it's authentic.

TERRY: [*to Jack*] Can you actually prove it?

JACK: I believe so. And I don't think that Jeremy will agree to discuss this interesting email during our next Departmental meeting.

WILSON: It's outrageous! Are you threatening me?

JACK: No, not at all. But I find that you are bringing disrepute to our Department. And if Terry does not agree to put this matter on the agenda for our next Departmental meeting I think the matter should be brought to the Dean's attention for further investigation.

TERRY: Just one moment. [*stands up and picks up the phone*] Jacky, can you please try to locate a PhD student, Kathy Rees, and if you can find her, ask her to come to my office right now? Yes, right now.

[*Terry, Jack and Wilson sit silently, each looking in a different direction. The telephone rings. Terry quickly picks it up.*]

TERRY: Yes? [*astonished*] Ah, hello Dave. How are you? Haven't heard from you for a while. What's up? [*Puts his hand on the receiver. Softly to Terry and Wilson*] Dave Cook from Seattle. [*Listens intently. After half a minute*] Actually, by chance Terry, Jeremy and I are at the moment having an interesting meeting here in my office. We are discussing recent research developments in our Department. Let me get input from them on your request.

[*to Terry and Wilson, with the telephone line open*] Dave is in New York and on his way back to Seattle he would like to pass by our town to visit his

son. He wants to know whether we could arrange a talk for him so that he can cover his travel expenses. Jack, would you mind arranging his lecture?

JACK: Oh, now I understand why he is so interested in spending a sabbatical in our Department: he just wants to be closer to his son.

TERRY: [*quickly puts his hand on the receiver*] Jack, how can you? Dave is a prominent researcher and our Department is an ideal place to host such a distinguished visitor. Am I right, Jeremy?

WILSON: [*slowly, to emphasise his point*] Absolutely, absolutely.

TERRY: [*to the phone*] Dave? I just talked to Jack and Jeremy. They are both delighted that you want to pass by. We shall be happy to organise a lecture for you. Jack volunteered to take care of the details. He will get in touch with you.

[*a knock to the door*] Have to finish now: I think another person is coming to join our research meeting. Jack will get in touch with you. Bye, Dave. Great talking to you.

[*Wipes his forehead and throws an angry look at Jack. Aloud*] Come in!

A WOMAN'S VOICE from behind the half open door: Dr Warren, Ms Rees is here. [*Jack and Wilson exchange looks.*]

TERRY: Thank you Jacky. [*officially*] Come in!

[*A young attractive red haired girl enters, dressed in a mini skirt and a too short blouse. Looks astonished at Jack, Terry and Wilson.*]

TERRY: [*formally*] Good afternoon Ms Rees. Please sit down. [*points to a free chair*] The reason I asked you to come to my office is this email.

[*Hands her the piece of paper. Rees starts reading. Gets red on her face. Returns it to Terry who folds it and puts it into the inner pocket of his jacket.*]

TERRY: And? Are you familiar with this email? As you may notice it was sent by you.

REES: But, but, Professor Warren, I did not write it! It's not my email.

TERRY: Are you sure? It does not look to me like a fake.

REES: I swear it, I did not write it. How could I? [*looks quickly at Jack and Wilson*]

TERRY: [*pointing to Jack*] Well, Professor Roberts claims that this email is authentic. Ms Rees, have you got anything to say about it?

REES: [*regaining composure*] I said already that I did not write it and have nothing more to add.

TERRY: Let me think. [*moves his chair towards his computer*] Ms Rees. Please sit here. May I ask you to login to your account?

REES: Are you sure Professor Warren?

TERRY: Yes, please login.

[*Rees sits down at Terry's chair and after a couple of mouse clicks types her password.*]

REES: [*quietly*] I am logged in.

TERRY: [*approaches her*] May I? [*sits at his chair*] Let me do advanced search. [*takes the email printout out of his pocket and looks at it*] Freudian slip. [*starts typing and looks at the screen*]

[*Silence. Tension in the air. Everybody looks at Terry. After half a minute.*]

TERRY: [*looking at the screen*] No results. No document found.

JACK: What? [*Gets up and walks to Terry's computer. To Kathy Rees.*] Did you delete it?

REES: [*taken aback*] Professor Roberts. What do you mean?

JACK: I mean, did you delete this email?

REES: [*protesting*] But I said already that I did not send it.

JACK: [*shaking his head*] It's impossible.

TERRY: [*formally*] Ms Rees, may I log out from your account? Ms Rees, thank you for coming. I think it clarifies the matter. I hope you will excuse us for a moment. [*accompanies her to the door*] Good bye and I am sorry for the inconvenience. And please keep this regrettable misunderstanding to yourself.

### **In the afternoon, at Jack's office**

[*Jack and Frank sit opposite each other.*]

JACK: [*with his face hidden in his hands*] Frank, I should not have listened to you. It was really a mistake. It went so awfully wrong that Terry suggested afterwards that I submit a resignation letter.

FRANK: But he can't force you to resign?

JACK: OK, I agree that I didn't do anything illegal. But he says that otherwise he will bring the matter up with the Dean and provide evidence that I am libeling distinguished members of our Department. And then I shall be fired for sure.

FRANK: Speaking about illegal things. [*picks up his briefcase and takes out a stack of CD-roms*] Here. I finally made copies of all five games for your son. Sorry that it took so long. In one case, as I told you yesterday, there was a problem, because there was no security code on the cover. So I had to crack the software on the original CD-rom. It works now.

JACK: Thanks Frank.

[*takes the stack of CD-roms from him and puts them into his briefcase*] But I still don't understand one thing. How come you printed this email of Rees to Wilson and the next day it was not in her directory anymore?

FRANK: She must be a smart girl. Probably by chance I logged into her account just at the right moment. She must have deleted this email soon afterwards.

JACK: Perhaps there are some other emails of her that I could still use as evidence?

FRANK: Don't be naive. If she deleted that email so fast, she has certainly checked thoroughly all her files by now and cleaned everything up.

JACK: [*sighing*] You must be right. I really don't know what to do now. Terry gave me a deadline till tomorrow to write my resignation letter.

FRANK: Well, I see only one solution.

JACK: Yes?

FRANK: That you break into Wilson's account.

JACK: What??? Are you joking?

FRANK: Not at all. Look, if she sent this email to him, he must have received it. Am I right?

JACK: Right. But you don't expect me to break into his account.

FRANK: Why not? Do you have anything to lose? [*with a mischievous smile*] Only a job. Anyway, it's your choice. If you wish, here is the tool of the crime. [*walks to Frank's computer and sits down behind the monitor. Quickly types now and then, clicks the mouse and waits. Stops after a couple of minutes.*] Here, look.

JACK: [*approaches his computer*] What?

FRANK: You see, this is a hacker's program, free on the web, that you can use to try to break into computer accounts. I have now installed it in your directory. You just need to specify the computer account and press ENTER. Simple, isn't it?

JACK: Frank, you are crazy. I have a feeling that I am sinking further and further in some morass.

FRANK: Well, this way you will at least learn some useful computer science, something different from this artificial intelligence of yours.

[*Stands up and leaves Jack's office. Turns back in the door.*]

FRANK: Ah, I would have forgotten. [*returns, picks up from his briefcase another CD-rom and hands it to Jack*] Here. A bonus CD, with a copy of Microsoft Office. A friend of mine was in Thailand on vacation and bought two copies for me for peanuts. I thought you might use it at home. The serial number is enclosed so you won't have problems with the installation. [*after a small break, with a grin*] In case of problems ask your son. Anyway, since Terry decided that we are not allowed to use the software installed at work at home, I had little choice.

[*Jack puts the CD-rom in his briefcase.*]

JACK: Ah yes, I also forgot something. When I was at Terry's office, Dave Cook called. So it turns out that his son lives here. This explains why he is interested in a sabbatical in our Department. Anyway, he now wants to pass by and give a lecture.

FRANK: [*with a contemptuous look, shaking head*] Jack, you will never learn.

JACK: [*astonished*] What do you mean?

FRANK: Look, sure his son lives now here. But the reason he wants to come here is that he now has a relationship with a woman who lives here.

JACK: What do you mean? How do you know these things?

FRANK: How? Easy. I just happened to meet this woman at a party at my sister's house last month. After a couple of drinks she told me that Cook met her here a couple of months ago, while visiting his son and since then she has been traveling to Seattle. So now it's his turn.

JACK: [*with disbelief*] And both Terry and Wilson think that Cook's plans have something to do with the quality of our Department.

FRANK: [*with a shrug*] So be it. [*looks at his watch*] Have to go.

**2 hours later, at Jack's office**

JACK: [*Looks at his computer screen. Stands up and picks up the phone and calls somebody.*] Frank, listen, I've cracked it. But I need your help now. I forgot how the advanced search went. [*listens to the explanations*] OK, if you can't come, please explain it to me. I recall it was simple. [*listens attentively*] Wait. And then? Ah, got it. Thanks.

[*Puts down the phone and sits behind his computer. Starts typing something slowly, with two fingers. Looks at the screen. After two minutes he makes a couple of clicks with the mouse, gets up and leaves the room. Two minutes later returns with two pieces of paper in his hand. Sits down at his desk and reads them. Then holds his head with two hands and does not move for a minute. A knock at the door. Jack, as if scared, hesitates where to put the two pages he printed. Puts them quickly into a drawer.*]

JACK: Come in!

[*The door opens. Wilson comes in. Holds his briefcase in his hand. Jack stands up.*]

WILSON: Roberts, I wanted to have a chat with you. [*adds through clenched teeth*] Now.

JACK: I also wanted to talk with you.

WILSON: Yes, and what about?

JACK: [*opens the drawer of his desk, picks up one page he just printed and starts reading aloud. The text appears on a huge screen above the stage.*]

Date: Mon, May 26, 2003, 13:46

From: <Jeremy Wilson> jeremy

To : <Kathy Rees> kathyr

Subject: Freudian slip

As a researcher I am always interested in new discoveries.  
Alas, till 4 pm I will be in a lousy meeting.  
But see you afterwards in my office.  
Very curious.

Jeremy

Does this sound familiar to you? Is that why you left our last Department meeting before the end, at 4 pm? And is that why you work here each Saturday?

*[Wilson gets red on his face.]*

WILSON: What? What is it? How did you get it?

JACK: *[hiding the printed page behind his back]* Does not matter. I hope you agree that this is very interesting. And also very damaging.

WILSON: Oh yes? *[resumes his composure]* Just a moment. And do you recognise this?

*[takes out some heavy printout from his briefcase and shows it to Jack]* 'Mastering the Basics of Photography'. And does this look familiar to you? Your wife scolded my son that he spilled apple juice on it and that you will have to print it again at work. Bad luck for you: by mistake, Daniel took it with him when he was leaving your house. He thought that to repair the damage I could print a new copy instead.

JACK: What? And you kept it for two months at your house? To blackmail me?

WILSON: And what are you doing now yourself with this email printout?

*[Jack tries to grab the copy of the 'Mastering the Basics of Photography' from Wilson's hand. At the same time Wilson tries to get hold of the email printout Jack holds behind his back. They start fighting. Wilson pushes Jack back and takes off his jacket. They both catch their breath and resume fighting.]*

### **Two months later, in a business company canteen**

*[An elegant canteen, with modern, empty, tables and chairs and well arranged light falling through the ceiling. A gentle noise of other peoples' conversations in the background. Jin Song and Gabriel sit at a table and finish their lunch.]*

JIN SONG: *[gets up]* Gabriel, a cup of coffee?

GABRIEL: Yes. Thanks Jin Song.

*[After a couple of minutes Jin Song returns with two coffees.]*

GABRIEL: Thanks. You know, I am really grateful that you arranged this summer job here for me.

JIN SONG: Glad to hear it. Anyway, I like it here very much. And you?

GABRIEL: Me too. This last month has been extremely useful for me.

JIN SONG: I actually have some good news for you. My boss is very satisfied with the programming work you did during the past month. He says that what you delivered could be used immediately.

GABRIEL: [*blushing with evident pleasure*] I'm really happy to hear it. I worked hard on it.

JIN SONG: I know, I know. It shows. Anyway, he wants to keep you here. He says that the company could arrange a visa and the working permit for you within two or three months. What do you think? It's certainly better here than in that lousy Department.

GABRIEL: Don't mention the Department. I don't want to talk about it anymore. Do you really think it could be arranged?

JIN SONG: Sure. Look, in my case the paperwork did not even take two months. The U.S. needs lots of people in the IT sector so they process this type of visa application pretty fast.

GABRIEL: I would love to. It would be really great.

JIN SONG: OK, so I shall talk to him this afternoon. [*gets up*] Ah, I have almost forgotten. [*pushes across the table a folded newspaper*] Read. Here. [*points with a finger at some article on the first page*]

GABRIEL: [*Starts reading. After a while.*] What? Sixty years?

JIN SONG: Yah, the law enforcement in this country is pretty tough. You did not know about it?

GABRIEL: So they decided that it was first degree murder? And otherwise he would have gotten much less?

JIN SONG: Yah. Exactly.

GABRIEL: But he handed himself in the same day and said that it was in self-defense.

JIN SONG: You should read till the end. You see, they found a printout of two of Wilsons' emails in his office with some text compromising Wilson. Also, in his directory a program was installed that allows you to break into computer accounts. And his computer was logged into Wilson's account. So the prosecutor claimed that he was probably blackmailing Wilson and that Wilson confronted him in his office. Anyway, they write here that there was



a clash between them the day before in the office of the chairman about some issue.

GABRIEL: I actually heard about it. Ever since this happened I have been wondering what it was all about.

JIN SONG: Don't know. Apparently the police took all the evidence with them that same day and next day all the professors had to testify. They also write here that they found some CD-roms with computer games and their illegal copies and an illegal copy of Microsoft Office in Roberts's briefcase.

GABRIEL: All this is really incredible. And to think that all the time I believed that Roberts did act in self-defense. No wonder that this story has now reached the first pages of the newspapers.

JIN SONG: I told you, the sooner you leave this Department, the better. [*getting up*] Have to go now. You can return the newspaper to me later. Ah, I almost forgot. I also got an email from my thesis supervisor, Anderson. He writes that they, as he phrased it, 'have deposed' Warren as the chairman. Apparently Warren for several years had been getting some fat cheque from a publisher from Holland and never declared it. So they gave him a choice of either paying all the taxes retroactively or to resign. So, of course, Warren preferred to resign.

GABRIEL: But why did they threaten him? What for?

JIN SONG: Anderson writes that Warren introduced some ridiculously restrictive measures concerning conference travels and that something had to be done about it. He also wrote to me proudly that he was asked to give an invited talk at some conference in Plovdiv in Bulgaria. Poor idiot.

GABRIEL: What do you mean?

JIN SONG: You don't know? So you were not getting these emails? There is some professor Brunov in Bulgaria and each year he sends personalised invitations to some conference at a seashore in Bulgaria to hundreds of people. He first concentrated on Europe but now has extended his net and also covers the US. So now everybody in our Department gets the invitation, including all the PhD students. Probably this Brunov does not know the distinction between a faculty member and a PhD student. I also got one last year. He just invites anybody whose name he can find on the institution website. With some minor programming one could automate the whole process. But he probably does it the old fashioned way, by sending each email separately.

GABRIEL: Anyway, I am not returning there. No way. [*after a short break, shaking his head*] And to think that he was my supervisor. Thank God, he did not try this letter knife on me.

### Friday morning, in Jack's house

[*Mary sits on a sofa, in a dressing gown. Holds in her hand a mug with coffee. Puts the mug on the low table next to the sofa and picks up the newspaper. Starts reading. The door from the bedroom opens. Jack enters in pajamas, yawning slowly approaches Mary.*]

JACK: When did you get up?

MARY: Half an hour ago.

JACK: What's the time?

MARY: Half past seven. [*Continues reading. Jack enters the kitchen and returns with a mug of coffee. Sits down next to Mary and slowly starts drinking his coffee. Does not move for a while.*]

JACK: [*after a couple of seconds, slowly*] Adam is still asleep?

MARY: [*without interrupting her reading*] Yes. We should soon wake him up if he does not wake up himself. You know, I should have told you yesterday: he is really proud of you.

[*Jack does not react, lost in thoughts*]

MARY: [*after a couple of seconds*] You remember, it is this evening.

JACK: [*yawning*] Yes. Indeed. [*after a couple of seconds looks at the watch*] I see Wilson this morning. [*after another couple of seconds*] Anything interesting in the newspaper?

MARY: Yes, an amazing story on the first page. Look. [*folds the newspaper and passes it to Jack*]

JACK: [*Starts reading. After a couple of seconds.*] Incredible. Sixty years?

MARY: Yes, and to think that this could have been your Department.

JACK: [*Stops reading. Puts the newspaper aside.*] Now I remember. I had a very strange dream. It started with Frank coming to my office ...

MARY: [*does not listen*] I ironed your tie and jacket yesterday evening.

JACK: [*lost in thoughts*] Thanks.

MARY: So you said that this time the Provost is coming?

JACK: Yes, that's what Chris told me.

MARY: And what is the title of this theater play tonight?

JACK: An honorary degree.

[*The curtain.*]