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## Vicinity of Luck

“This will never happen again” was the first thing he heard when he opened his eyes. She was pulling on a boot at the edge of the bed. He felt a little dizzy and couldn’t tell whether it was from residual alcohol in his brain or that his blood pressure was high.

He thought, “suits me” but he asked, “Some coffee before you go?” He could tell that it must have snowed overnight, because the room was filled with the soft glow of its reflected light.

She gave an exasperated sigh then pushed her feet into the boots and stood up. “Let’s keep this between us.” She turned to look at him. “No offense, but this is kinda weird.”

“None taken” he replied. What she lacked in beauty, she made up for in youth. He pulled the covers under his chin, conscious of the wrinkles around his neck. He was desperately trying to contain a self-satisfied smirk.

Her boot heels rapped sharply on the hallway floor. He waited for the click of the door and then she was gone. “What luck!” he thought and bounded out of bed.

A thick, heavy snow coated even the thinnest tree branches outside his window. The sky was a brilliant blue. He watched from the third floor window as she trudged through the deep snow on the sidewalk. He wondered whether classes would be cancelled Monday.

Her steps made black holes on the white plane of undisturbed snow. They plotted her progress from the door and down the sidewalk in an asymptotic sweep toward the street. He guessed at its function as somewhere between  $f(x)=-1/y^2$  or  $-1/y^3$ . In any case, the points led to infinity and out of his life.

He loved the first big snow because it simplified the confusion of reality. It laid down a blank slate over the chaotic world and muffled its distracting sounds. He wrapped a scarf around his neck and put on his overcoat. Numbers swirled through his head as strongly at 65 as they did when he was 10. He looked in the mirror near the door and adjusted his hat. He was pleased.

Despite the bright sun, the motionless air stung his face with cold. He followed her tracks to the sidewalk then turned in the opposite direction,  $f(y)=\ln x$ . He was glad to forego the ritual of the awkward morning chitchat with someone who he barely knew. He was anxious to get to the shop and have a perfect espresso pulled by the maestro, Maurice. The bells from Rockefeller Chapel announced the end of Sunday service and amplified his ebullient mood.



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A guy shoveling the walk looked up at him as he passed and said, “man, you wearin’ that hat!” as only a black man can express. He laughed and called back “I’ll say, it cost enough.” The compliment added to his already abundant store of confidence.

Jeff had walked up and down Woodlawn Avenue for over 40 years. The campus had become so familiar to him that it had overwhelmed his early past growing up on a dairy farm. His gift with numbers manifested itself by the time he was eight. First teachers, then the school district recognized his talent and prevailed upon his parents to fast track him through academies that specialized in his kind. The University of Chicago was the culmination of their efforts and he embraced it from the moment that he arrived. The path from student to professor unfolded like the simplest of equations.

He turned the corner at 55<sup>th</sup>. A plow truck came scraping by, piling more snow on the cars that were already buried by the storm. His coffee shop was originally called “Pi” to represent his career devoted to prime numbers but people assumed it stood for the perimeter of a circle or, more irritating, came looking for fruit filled desserts. He changed the name to “Pythagoras” a year after opening.

The bell above the door jingled as he entered and announced “Good morning, Maurice.” Maurice looked up from behind the counter and with unflappable good spirits called back, “Good morning, Professor Bates.”

When Maurice first began to work at the shop, Jeff instructed him to use his first name because “Professor Bates” made him feel old. Maurice would dutifully comply for a few weeks, but gradually returned to “Professor Bates”. After his many attempts failed to change the behavior, Jeff finally accepted the honorific.

“What’s the quote of the day, today?” Maurice asked.

Jeff stomped the snow from his boots and looked up at the ceiling to think. “Mathematics is the language with which God wrote the universe.” He hung his coat and hat on a peg next to his corner table.

“I like it. Who said that?” Maurice said as he took a notebook from his breast pocket and wrote down the quote.

“Galileo.”

He walked to the opposite wall and stared at the portraits of historic mathematicians. His gaze fell on a medieval picture of Abelard and Heloise. The couple were depicted deep in a philosophical discourse. A tiny bubble of thought rose up from Jeff’s subconscious to temper his good mood with a tincture of sadness. The thought was of Ellen.



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Maurice released steam from the espresso machine and read the gauge. "It's almost ready. One espresso coming up." He enjoyed using English idioms and gave them a lilting expression all his own. Unlike Jeff's bucolic past, Maurice was raised in a Catholic orphanage in Rwanda. He had no memory of his parents beyond a dim recollection of his mother's smile, and even that he wasn't sure whether he had only imagined it. But like Jeff, his brilliant grasp of numbers appeared early and burned through the chaos and turmoil of war. When things settled down, the good people of the orphanage brought him to the attention of the government. He was now close to finishing his dissertation in set theory.

"Learn anything new at Mass?" Jeff asked, still pondering Abelard and Heloise. He liked that Maurice was a believer even though Jeff was not. It prevented their conversations from falling into a closed loop.

Maurice had to raise his voice over the hissing of the machine. "The sermon was about the power of miracles" he said while he placed Jeff's espresso on the counter.

"Like water into wine?" Jeff asked as he picked up the tiny cup and sat at his table. Maurice sat on the stool behind the counter. His pause indicated that he had already considered the topic and was ready to expound upon it. "No, everyday miracles." He leaned back against the brick wall. "Like a check that arrives unexpectedly, or a phone call from someone you lost touch with."

"Or a woman?" Jeff asked with a crooked smile before he took his first sip.

A blush rose up from Maurice's neck to his forehead. Jeff was pretty certain that Maurice was a virgin, either from religious convictions or the innate nerdiness that comes with genius. He enjoyed interjecting women into their conversations just to see how Maurice would react. As usual, Maurice let the question pass without comment.

"For any given moment, there's a finite set of the possible. Huge but finite. If we can quantify the events in this set, give them values, add them all up and then divide the sum by the number of events," Maurice talked very fast. and screwed his eyes up so that only the whites showed. "We would have a standard mean for what we call normal."

Maurice was a godsend. They could talk about any topic and eventually it would turn into numbers. As math prodigies they shared a magical connection, like identical twins, that transcended age, race and temperament. Jeff closed his eyes and leaned his head back while listening to Maurice as if he were concentrating on a saxophone solo in a jazz club.

"Miracles could be defined as standard deviations from the average. The Law of Large Numbers says that the average will tend towards the expected return and



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miracles are in the variance of the actual results. If we measure this variance by averaging the square of the difference between each result and the mean then the standard deviation is the square root of the variance. So, a miracle is when the average result is ...”

The bell over the door interrupted Maurice’s thought. Three young women walked in and one of them called out brightly “Hi Maurice.” He suddenly stood up with a goofy smile that Jeff had never seen before. “Hi Cary” he replied and watched as they sat at a table near the window. They leaned in toward one another, giggling as undergrads are wont to do but with a hint of the conspiratorial. Jeff recognized the signs of budding romance immediately and thought to himself “I wonder how long this has been going on?”

Maurice forgot entirely about his discourse on miracles. He wiped the steam nozzle on the espresso machine and stole quick glances at the girls’ table. Jeff felt both envious and protective of Maurice for his first steps into the realm of romance. He wanted to take Maurice aside and talk to him about what to expect but knew the poor guy would probably keel over and die from embarrassment if he brought it up.

“What you’re describing is luck, not miracles.”

Maurice looked at Jeff as if he just appeared. “That’s luck, not a miracle.” Jeff repeated. “A miracle is a unique event.” Again, he thought of Ellen and had no idea of why. It had been at least two years since they stopped seeing each other. She was the even to his odd and the sum of their relationship would always be odd.

Jeff stood and went back to the picture of Abelard and Heloise. “Luck is like an irrational number, the square root of two,” he said while fixated on Heloise in her wimple and with thin arm outstretched toward Abelard as if she were chastising him. “We know in general where it sits on the number line but the closer we get to it, the more it fades away.” He cocked his head to ponder her expression. “The best that we can hope for is to be in the vicinity of luck.”

He turned to Maurice. “Do you know Abelard and Heloise?”

Maurice still had the goofy grin, “Professor Kaufman talked about him in Logic class. He said he had a brilliant mind.”

“So did she.” Jeff looked at the picture again. “And she was beautiful.”

“The nun?”

“You never heard of Heloise?” Jeff asked with a tinge of reprimand. “The name has never come up?” He slowly shook his head from side to side to emphasize the



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negation of the point. Maurice's grin waned. "The name means nothing to you?" Maurice looked like a guilty child, caught red handed who wanted to confess. He took out the notebook from his breast pocket, ready to record whatever Jeff would say next.

"She was his lover."

"A nun?" Maurice squinched up his face in disbelief.

"She wasn't a nun when they met. Abelard used the vicinity of luck to get close to her. He became her tutor. They fell in love." Jeff smiled and turned back to the picture. "They did so much f..." he suddenly remembered the girls and changed tact. "... ah, philosophizing that they started the path to modern logic."

Maurice wrote in his notebook. "How do you spell Heloise? How much did she contribute? A lucky man to have such a woman."

"Not so much. Her uncle had him castrated" Jeff said quietly without looking away from their picture.

Maurice put down his pen. "Oh."

"We would often be sorry if our wishes are gratified." Jeff pronounced then added, "Aesop."

Maurice scribbled it in his notebook.

Jeff turned to Maurice, "you need to take some humanities classes. It can't all be math."

He saw Ellen about a year ago, from a distance, crossing the Quad. It sent him into a depression spiral that lasted two weeks. He was able to overcome it through alcohol and casual sexual encounters. From then on, he checked her teaching schedule and made sure to avoid any unlucky encounters with her.

The girl who greeted Maurice got up from their table and approached the counter. Jeff had the idea to give Maurice some room to talk with her by taking over the task of preparing her order. "Hey Maurice, do you mind if I do the next one?" He lifted the extension and stepped behind the counter. She was bubbly and cute in a bossy-girl sort of way. A perfect candidate for a first time relationship.

"What can I do you for?" said Jeff in his most avuncular manner.

The girl looked surprised and hesitant. Her companions stared at them like wary zebras at a savanna watering hole. "Um, ah, .... " she stammered, occasionally looking



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back at her table mates. "Professor Bates... ah...would you mind if Maurice did it?" She grimaced as if to avoid hurting Jeff's feelings. "We like it the way he does it."

Jeff laughed a bit but the rejection still stung. "No, of course not. Maurice is a pro." He retreated to the wall of pictures. Jeff noticed Abelard's right hand, its accusatory index finger pointed at Heloise. Despite the flattened perspective of medieval art, the painting captured with vivid reality the gestures of feuding lovers.

He felt a flash of anger. "I was just a lark for her. A middle age diversion."

They met over a pile of orangutan teeth. She needed a statistical analysis of the difference in dentition between sexes. It was outside of his expertise but she was told that he was very approachable, particularly with women. The business of their first meeting took 15 minutes but she stayed to talk for an hour. She was atypical of the anthropology department; heels, no make-up, mismatched earrings. Looking back, Jeff had to admit that his woman-radar was asleep. She was close to his age and clearly his intellectual equal, two conditions that he reserved for friends, not relationships. Plus, she was married. Not that that made any difference to him. He had no intention of falling in love, it just happened over time like something from the soil.

He was so mesmerized by the picture and his memories that he never heard the bell over the door. Robert was at his elbow, so close that it gave Jeff a start.

"Jeff, do you have a minute?" he asked while glancing at his phone. His hair was shaved on the sides of his head with one lock that hung down perfectly to his cheek. It reminded Jeff of a bisected parabola. Robert always wanted fast answers to complex questions.

"Okay, Robert. What's on your mind?" The only thing good about Robert's visits is that they never lasted very long. "Maurice, can we get a couple of espressos?"

"Coming right up." Maurice called. "Hi Robert."

"I need some help with Okum's Law." Robert said as they sat at Jeff's table.

"I'm not an economist, Robert," Jeff sighed. "Isn't Professor Berlinsky your doc advisor?"

"I don't think he likes me" he said trying to elicit some sympathy.

"Oh, I doubt that" Jeff lied. "But, okay, what do you need help in?"

Robert hesitated as if he was about to reveal something unpleasant. "I want to apply the Axiom of Choice to Okum's Law."



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Jeff rolled his eyes, “Robert, we’ve been through this before. I don’t even know where to begin with you.”

“Jeff, I’m going to rock the world of economics to its foundations.” He unzipped his Armani jacket. The smell of the leather overwhelmed the aroma of coffee. He leaned over the table with the determined look of someone convinced of the power of their will. “I’m close.”

“The Axiom of Choice is not connected to your topic. I don’t understand your obsession with it.” Jeff tried to suppress his irritation. “If you want to understand ZFC talk to Maurice.”

“What’s that?” Robert asked in surprise.

“Zermelo-Fraenkel Choice. It’s another name for Axiom of Choice. If you don’t know even that...” He raised his voice, “Maurice, can you help Robert with ZFC?”

“Sure” he replied as he brought the espressos to their table.

Jeff noted that Robert bristled at the sound of Maurice’s voice. “What’s he got against Maurice? I hope it’s not racial.”

Robert remained hunkered over the table and looked up at Jeff. “But if you could just give me some clues. I need it for my model on unemployment rates...” Robert explained his model slowly but with a heavy momentum, like an unstoppable dinosaur lumbering through a Cretaceous forest.

“She had a choice... I didn’t,” Jeff thought as his mind drifted from Robert’s droning. “Choice, yes or no. One or zero. They sit next to one another on the number line but with an infinite sea between them. All other numbers are alike, only one and zero are distinct, like nothing else. We always went half way, then half way of that half and so on and so on, like Zeno’s Paradox. We would never reach each other and had no calculus to overcome it.”

Jeff’s attention checked-in on Robert’s plodding monologue “... then I saw Axiom of Choice and thought ‘This is what I need...’” He was still in an ego loop and Jeff returned to his thoughts on Ellen.

“I didn’t ask for it, she came to me” he fumed to himself. He knew he was falling for her when he noticed that during her visits her incessant chatter had ceased to be tedious and shifted to mellifluous, like a classical music station played low in an office. It allowed him to look at her face without the awkwardness of a stare and take in the beauty of her features. Remembering her face brought a renewed brew of joy and sadness.



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He glanced at Robert. The kid was looking up at the ceiling and fluttering his hands "... my model could end poverty as we know it." He suddenly fixed his eyes on Jeff in a way that made him feel uneasy. "With your help, we could make the economy work for humanity." Jeff felt an unexpected sympathy for Professor Berlinsky.

"I appreciate your goals, Robert, but I can't do the work for you."

Robert looked crestfallen for a moment then took a deep breath and continued. "Just clues," he pleaded, "I know that set theory is the answer. Cantor blew this open with his infinities of infinity..."

"Where does he get this nonsense?" Jeff thought "and why this animosity toward Maurice?" He could tell from the inflection of Robert's voice that he was winding down and Jeff determined that he would speed up his departure.

"Anyhow, check out ZFC and if you need help let Maurice know." He picked up their empty cups. A look of hurt crossed Robert's face.

"I've got to go." He zipped up his jacket and darted out the door.

"How did he ever get into the doctoral program?" Jeff stated out loud.

Maurice shook his head. "He's no Gauss."

"He certainly is not," Jeff spewed. "Lucky for him he's from money."

Jeff reviewed the salient points from the encounter; inane request for help, the weird look, and his unhidden disdain for Maurice. Then it hit him.

"Is Robert gay?" he whispered toward Maurice.

Maurice was surprised by the question, "I wouldn't know."

"Wow," Jeff thought, "my very own catamite."

He was about to resume their musings on luck when Jeff noticed Maurice's alarmed expression. He turned just in time to see her open the door. A jolt of gladness and adrenaline shot through his body, followed quickly with dread and anger.

"Hi Professor McGlynn." Maurice called out, hoping to somehow blunt the tectonic crash that was about to happen.

"Hello Maurice" she said with a friendly but worried look.

She was more beautiful than Jeff had remembered. He felt all the muscles below his sternum go flaccid. The embedded instincts of fight or flight were equally useless. Over the last two years, he had rehearsed this moment in his head countless times. He



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had thought of retorts with bitter sarcasm or nuanced remarks that would reveal his pain and noble character. Finally confronted with it, all he could think of to say was “This isn’t fair, Ellen.”

She looked down to her hand holding a tiny wrapped box. “I just stopped by to give you this.” She stuck her hand out toward him. Jeff stared at the gift, his mind sprinting to catch up with the unfolding event.

“Please” she said. “Please take it.”

The girls at the table stopped their chattering to listen. The bossy girl watched Maurice, proud that the object of her affection was close to such dramatic events. She was confident that her choice was of substance and not the typical math geek. Maurice, of course, was only focused on Jeff and Ellen.

He took the box like a catatonic in a psyche ward reaching for his meds. Mathematics that had supported him throughout his life and all its challenges had now failed him. To accept the gift felt like a bitter compromise, as if by taking it he was acknowledging that his pain of the last two years was of no consequence.

“Ha, ha” he thought, “the joke’s on me.”

Ellen smiled when Jeff took the gift. She had deliberated over this moment for a year. Even at the worst moments of turmoil as she put together the pieces of her smashed life, she thought of Jeff and what they had shared. She wanted to find the perfect expression of their past, something that would exalt the good of their relationship and leave no hint of the trauma. She breathed a sigh of relief when he took it.

It was the smile that rankled him. “At least,” he thought “she hasn’t said the word ‘friends’.”

Ellen was filled with joy. The moment that she had prepared for and practiced in her head had unfolded perfectly. She was so happy that she wanted to cry. Without thinking it through, she said “Jeff, I so want us to be friends again.” It was delivered with sincerity and deep affection. It was received like a shiv between the ribs.

Jeff’s jaw clenched and only his lips moved. “Boys throw stones at frogs in sport. The frogs die in earnest.”

He felt the slap before he saw it happen. The girls at the table gasped. Maurice looked down at his hands in his lap. Ellen’s eyes were furious.

“It wasn’t a sport for me!” Tears hung at the point of dropping onto her cheeks. “I didn’t have the luxury of Jimmy’s Tap and young women. I had people who I cared for,



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that I let down. I'm a grandmother for Christ's sake." She turned and walked out of Jeff's life for the last time.

The shop was eerily quiet. The only sound after the jangle of the doorbell was the clicks and hisses of the espresso machine. The sting of the slap was starting to spread across his cheek. He stared at the closed door.

"Who said that?"

"What?" Jeff snapped at Maurice.

"The thing about the frogs. That was good." He already had his notebook on the counter.

Jeff gritted his teeth. "Bion. Bion of Borythenes."

Maurice wrote it down. "With an 'i'?" he looked up at Jeff.

"I suppose this is all very amusing." Jeff seethed.

"I've seen worse" said the genocide orphan.

Maurice's simple comment collapsed Jeff's anger balloon. At first, he wanted to sputter an excuse, appeal to the room that he wasn't at fault but Maurice's words brought him back to Earth. He smiled like any good teacher who has just been schooled by his student.

"I bet you have," Jeff said. He put on his hat and coat. "I'll be at Jimmy's."

Two of the girls resumed their feverish conversation but the bossy-girl stared at Maurice in adulation as he cleaned coffee cups.

Jeff watched the women through the mirror behind the bar. The empty box and gift wrapping were balled up beside his pint of beer. "Post docs" he thought. They were in their early 30's and looked like they had run out of things to say to one another.

He had just begun his third beer of the afternoon and had to pace himself for the evening. He took a careful sip and mused, "the first rule of the vicinity of luck is spatial, close in a geometry way. I've got to move to their table." This was always the most risky part of the procedure but he had been practicing his charm for so long that even in rejection the women were always gracious.

The chubby one looked like fun, witty with a lot of energy. She leaned over her beer as if protecting it. The other, the prettiest of the three, wore black framed glasses



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and dressed to discourage male attention. She slouched against the back of her chair away from the table. The third was the one Jeff had his eye on. "Sicilian or Greek?" he wondered. She had a riot of black curly hair that was as intimidating as her face was inviting.

He made the move to their table flawlessly, not too fast to be a threat and not too slow to look unconfident. "Mind if I join you?" he asked with his warmest tones. He gave each of them an equal share of his look.

"Professor Bates, please sit down" The chubby one blurted out, grateful for the diversion. He was surprised that she knew his name and wondered what else they knew about him.

"Rule two is familiarity, get close socially" he thought, then said as he sat "please, call me Jeff."

The chubby woman shot out her hand, "I'm Ashley." She enveloped his hand with hers and gave it an impressive shake. The thin one leaned forward cautiously, then lightly embraced Jeff's fingers, "Brittany" was her curt answer. His chair was closest to the last one. He had to back away to offer his hand. "Jeff" he smiled. "Cima" she replied to him just as warm. He detected an accent but couldn't place it. Rule three for the vicinity of luck was to get close mentally, find out what interests them.

"Well, A-B-C. Ashley, Brittany, Cima." He repeated their names to strengthen the bond of familiarity. "Students?" he asked purposely rounding down his estimate of their ages.

"Post docs. Brittany and I are Art History and Cima is Women's Studies." It was apparent that Ashley was going to own the conversation. "This will be challenging" he thought. "Where is that accent from? Definitely neither Sicilian nor Greek." His mind rapidly went through appropriate topics to women's studies but it was far less extensive than his knowledge of art.

"How did you get mixed up with these two?" he joked. Cima laughed, "It is better to ask how they got mixed up with me." It was just enough of an answer for Jeff to nail down the accent.

"Israeli! Of course, the hair, the features. Sephardi. She's a walking map of pre-Inquisition Spain." His mind delighted in the discovery but he made sure that it didn't show in his expression. It was far too early to give the majority of his attention to Cima so he turned to Ashley to give himself time to think.

"What period?" he asked her.



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Ashley's face lit up, "Counter Reformation, particularly Veronese."

Jeff needed more time so he opened a path for Ashley to expound. "Why him?" She gushed how Veronese conformed to the rules set by the Council of Trent. Jeff lowered his head as if in deep concentration but he was actually rummaging through his mind for anything to connect Spain, Jews and feminism. He looked up for a moment at Brittany. Her arms were crossed over her chest and her eyes said "Don't get any ideas, Mister." Evidently, his reputation on campus was far more extensive than he had imagined. He felt flattered that even at his age, she still considered him a threat. He gave her a quick wink.

It suddenly came to him – Averroës, twelfth century Islamic scholar. He let out an involuntary "Ah!" Ashley stopped her discourse and asked, "So, you've heard of it?" Jeff had no idea what she was referring to and bluffed with, "Vaguely." Ashley happily continued her lecture on Veronese and the Church while Jeff filled in the gaps of his memory on Averroës. "Muslim philosopher, Platonist, enlightened views of women. Spanish Jews and Arabs are as tight as Irish twins." He became more excited the more he thought about it. "It's an extremely narrow window but if she's aware of Averroës, it'll be smooth sailing. If not, it'll look like I'm trying too hard."

The immediate concern was that Ashley showed no signs of yielding the floor. The path that Jeff had cleared for her had become a superhighway. She was slipping into the history of the Catholic Church and Renaissance art. It was Brittany that saved the day.

"Religion was invented by men to control women" she glared at Jeff, iron arms planted across her chest like a Spartan hoplite.

"Not always, Brittany" Jeff smiled. "Averroës' treatise on the ideal state posited a full and equal role for women. A very progressive position for a Muslim scholar at the time."

"At any time" she shot back at him. It was probably the wink that tipped her over the edge.

"You know Averroës?" Cima said as she leaned toward him.

"Not in a scholarly way but aware. How about you?"

She smiled. "In a scholarly way. That treatise was the center of my dissertation."

"You don't say" Jeff remarked with a measure of exaggerated irony. He was overjoyed with his own cleverness. "Vicinity be gone!" he thought, "I've nailed luck



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precisely. I've found the square root of two." Yet, his poker face revealed nothing but an interest in Cima's dissertation.

Ashley looked as if a parent had taken away her bicycle. The momentum of her monologue had been broken and she was crushed, another casualty in the battle of seduction. Jeff asked Cima about her insights into Averroës and women's studies. Cima laughed out loud, "I can't believe that I've found someone in a tavern to talk to about Almohad Spain." After 20 minutes, Ashley and Brittany stood to leave. Brittany was bold enough to ask "you coming, Cima?" She shook her head no.

Echoes of Ellen had reverberated in Jeff's head throughout the evening. Even in the delightful company of Cima, he recalled Ellen's tiny frown whenever his questions hovered too close to her other life. He and Cima moved from Averroës to university life, to families and finally, to goals and hopes. By the time Cima suggested that they leave, Jeff had separately worked out in his head why he had been slapped and why he deserved it.

Jeff woke first. He could see from bed the swirling snow outside of his window. Cima's hair felt like lamb's wool on his chest. She stirred and snuggled closer to him. Her hand went across his chest and found the thin mesh chain around his neck. She opened her eyes to look at the object that hung from it.

"Did this come out of you?"

"An orangutan."

"I bet there's a story behind that" she said, emphasizing the word 'that'.

"There is, but I'm not going to tell you."

It wasn't the words, it was the way he said them that told her it was a matter of the heart.

"Ding!" Her phone called from the night table. She sat up in bed revealing her robust features as she read the screen. She pushed the mass of hair to her back and peered toward the window at the blizzard.

"Classes are cancelled" she announced happily. "What do you want to do today?"

He gave her a wry smile and said "Heal."

"I can help with that" she laughed and rolled on top of his body to kiss him.



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