

## 10. Consensual Rape

This amazing case, so typical of universities, eventually found its way to Colmes who, of course, relished its complexities. Severe repercussions might have followed had it not been for his ingenuity and his magical influence that reached far beyond the university campus.

Universities, large or small, are inhabited by young people most of whom are powered by excessive amounts of hormones, and those hormones press relentlessly to find their quarries in the cosmos of life and thereby justify their existence. Unavoidably, Colmes and me being males, sex is constantly on our minds, or should I say, constantly hammering at our minds. Though, I hesitate to applying this principle—which I call my number one rule of life—to Colmes whose sexuality is very much male, but definitely of the Victorian type. But let's put aside the special case of Colmes for the moment.

It is surely to be expected, indeed I can see no other way around it, that sex will completely dominate the lives of every single individual attending a university, especially those who are forced to live on top of each other (excuse the pun) in dormitories—the latter in most universities forced on all first year undergraduates (formerly called freshmen or freshettes). From my own experience as dorm supervisor of the South East Tower (once called the Columbus Tower but the name was recently woked out), I can attest that the majority of altercations, complaints or other unseemly events were at bottom (excuse the pun again) caused or driven by sex. Of course, as Sigmund Freud demonstrated over a century ago, civilization (the prime beacons of which are our universities) does much to suppress and caress this bubbling cauldron with learning, thinking, and doing (i.e. sport, which we will visit in a later case).

Now add an extra layer of young assistant professors, overlaid with a select bunch of full professors tenured and installed in the safety of their positions of authority and power, and the place is rife for the conflict (sex if you like) of hormones as they compete to find their places of Darwinian fitness. The

university provides the perfect place for the natural use of power and authority of one over another. One graciously “gives” (authority), the other gratefully receives (the subordinated). And here, I define the teacher-student relationship in which the rules of life are unconsciously implemented, and consciously overridden by learning.

The story I am about to tell exhibits all the elements of my admittedly somewhat abstract exposition here of university life. I am guessing that something like it happens every day over and over again on campuses all over America, indeed all over the human world where there are universities. (I am tempted to include the animal world here, but that would unnecessarily complicate my current exposition, given that animals appear to have sex “without thinking” and they do not have universities).

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But first, it is necessary to tell you a little about the protagonist of this story who, no doubt you have already guessed, is the President of Schumaker university, Finneas O’Brien. Yes, very much of Irish extraction, supposedly his great grandparents came over from Ireland late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the many Irish migrants of that period. His father was a police officer in New York City, a den of Irish politicians and graft, and his grandfather before him was a police officer of some kind. So the idea of authority and power was, though little acknowledged, embedded in the family tradition. Little wonder that young Finneas became a guard at the infamous Rikers Island jail, while he attended part time at the City College of New York. He volunteered to serve in World War 2, and for a time served as adjutant to General Patton. Unfortunately, when assisting General Patton to exit from his vehicle, the general, in a rage because someone had misconstrued his orders, slammed the door of the jeep and broke O’Brien’s leg. The injury never healed properly and he has walked with the aid of a cane ever since. He ended up supervising the Manzanar concentration camp for Japanese American citizens who were taken from their homes because of the war. The sorry story of those camps today is now well known, but at the time, there was not a great deal of concern. His experience in that camp made him a perfectly qualified candidate for the position of Warden of Sing Sing prison where he remained for ten years until his appointment in 1968 to the

founding faculty of the new School of Criminal Justice at the brand new Rockefeller inspired, Schumaker University. After six years as a full professor (he was in fact initially appointed as a full professor with tenure, rare indeed) he became Dean of that school, and in 1985, he was appointed President of the university. You may well ask, as did many members of the small faculty at the university, how it was that Finneas O'Brien became president of one of the largest public universities in New York, indeed, the United States, when his only academic qualification was an AB from City College of New York? Today, one cannot get a lowly assistant professor position without a Ph.D.

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As my introductory exposition makes clear, this story is about sex, though it is taking me a long time to get around to telling it. But then, the sex is better if you have to wait for it, is that not so?

To meet or work with O'Brien was to meet a consummate bureaucrat-come-politician, one who reeked of devotion to manipulation, circuitous talk, inferences, interspersed with commands, requests, and deliverance of praise and solicitations. When he spoke, which was a lot and continuously, one had no choice but to listen, or at least appear to be listening to him. He looked around the room and stared each person right in the face, so you got the impression that he was watching you. His favorite expression when someone did not agree with him was "you're not hearing me..." To use the popular academic jargon of today, one could not escape his gaze. People sat in awe of him. Well, that is the flattering way to say it. The other way is that people sat in fear of him.

And worse, out of that unhealthy withered frame of his, skinny from the head down (I mean it), balding gray head and round forehead above colorless eyes (probably gray) sitting behind rimless glasses, came a kind of depressed roar, shaped by lips that had surely never kissed, a voice that seemed to come from his nose, a monotonous but penetrating sound that could be heard two rooms away. It was one of those voices that was not a loud voice, but a penetrating voice that could be heard even in a noisy crowd.

And now you have it. I said at the beginning that this story is about sex, overstated perhaps, everything that happened on a

university campus was driven by sex. Who could be attracted to such a person as this President, I ask you?

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The way I have described university life so far sounds like a perfect place for sex everywhere. Yet we know that finding the “right” partner can be very difficult, especially if one does not know what one is looking for (except sex, which is a given, rather like a bicycle or car), or worse, if one does not know who or what to look for, and worse yet, one is hoping that someone is looking for one’s self (that is, the perennial identity crisis that is supposed to be settled by the time one graduates from university). But one can see that under this very unsettled condition is an earthquake waiting to erupt, buried in every university, covered up by curricula, many rules of behavior, deadlines, homework, term papers, exams, team sports, clubs, and what one might politely term, social events. The popular forms of these are school picnics, welcome parties, all officially condoned under strict compliance with rules of behavior. We will not mention hazing, which is a product of this condition, its origin intended to impose some kind of order, but that becomes hijacked by other facts of life such as tyranny of one or more over a few, or the tyranny of many over one.

A serious social event is a very special event when professors invite their students to their homes officially to promote friendly and even close relationships among students and faculty. One of the most common complaints expressed in routine student evaluations of their professors is that they do not get a chance to talk one-on-one with their professor. That the teaching is too distant. The professor stands apart, and lectures to the audience of students below (literally and figuratively). Social events are intended to overcome this gap between teacher and student.

And this, at last, is where our story begins. Ted the Red, the hero of the riveting case of *In Gun We Trust*, announced his annual hot tub party at his plush residence in Bethlehem, NY. At the time, hot tubs were not all that common, but they seemed a good extension of the summer picnics put on by the School in the Adirondacks where skinny dipping was unofficially required. Hot tub parties were always offered at the end of fall semester. This particular party was scheduled at the end of the semester

which happened to be Finneas O'Brien's first semester as President of the university. However, in order to show that his rapid rise to power had not gone to his head, and that he still had a soft spot for his old School of Criminal Justice, he showed up at Ted the Red's house. Ted, of course, was most flattered and pleased. Especially as he would press the President on his perennial complaint that he was under paid and that lawyers on a law school faculty get twice as much as he does. Though essentially true, no one took this seriously, including O'Brien.

It was an especially cold night and snow was predicted. As usual, the majority of students who came were female (excessively so).

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The President had declined to enter Ted's hot tub naked. His thin skeleton was too ugly for fine young women to see. Ted understood of course, though his own protruding belly against his otherwise slim tall body did not stop him from stepping into the hot water. What better scene than Ted the Male sitting in his hot tub surrounded by giggling naked graduate students all but one, at least by the look of them female, and one male, young, small, squat, but by and large a younger fitter and smoother looking body compared to Ted's.

Among the giggling guests was a Chinese girl, who had just arrived from Taiwan. There, she had risen to the level of Taipei Precinct chief one of the first female police officers to do so. A tiny, shy, and excessively well-mannered person, one would never have pegged her as the boss of an entire precinct. Though she did not look it, she was quite a bit older than the other students, who were young graduate students, and a couple still undergraduates. There is no other word to describe her than that she was simply a very nice person, with an infectious smile, and a lovely manner, one who made those around her feel most comfortable. And her looks were captured by her name, Chi-Ling, an excellent and beautiful young lady. Ted had invited her when he found himself sitting next to her at a committee meeting that he chaired, the faculty senate committee on human rights. The President had chosen him to chair the committee because he taught constitutional law.

Chi-Ling declined to enter the hot tub. She smiled broadly at Ted, then withdrew to the kitchen where she helped herself to

a cup of English breakfast tea, which she found a little too tart, for her liking. President O'Brien followed her to the kitchen. He felt uncomfortable surrounded by naked girls frolicking in the hot tub entertaining his colleague, whom he had known for many years and certainly knew what he was about (it wasn't anything to do with Red). And there were no specific rules of the university, as far as he knew, that forbade skinny dipping or hot tub bathing with one's students. Besides, they were off campus, so most likely if there were any rules they would not apply.

Chi-Ling heard the President's walking stick hit the floor and turned to face him. "Cup of tea?" she asked, all smiles.

It seemed to the President that her entire body smiled. He screwed up his eyes as if he were looking at some kind of mirage. Her beauty was overwhelming. The end of the walking stick slipped a little, most likely on something that had been dropped on the kitchen floor, and he staggered trying to keep his balance.

"Oh! Doctor O'Brien, please let me help!" said Chi-Ling cocking her head as though she were a dog that heard a noise.

"No! No! I'm fine," rattled the President. "And please call me Finn."

"Finn? What name is that? Would you like a cup of tea?" asked Chi-Ling again.

"Short for Finneas, my Christian name. And yes, I would like a cup of tea," stammered the President, totally enthralled.

She passed her own cup of tea to him, and poured another for herself.

Then the President blurted out, "are you living on campus?"

"Campus? Oh, the university you mean?" replied Chi-Ling in her best mousey voice.

The sound of her voice blinded him. He was so taken with her that he almost dropped the cup of tea as he took it from her dainty, perfectly proportioned hand. And he had not heard her respond, though perhaps she had and he was so stupefied that he did not hear it.

The solution to this strange impasse, an event of indefinable intercourse, was a silence, that feared non-event of all human interaction, whether virtual or real.

It was Chi-Ling who had the courage to break it. "Finn. Such an unusual English name," she said sweetly, cocking her head a little, her thick black hair, just brushing her shoulders, her fringe

dropping a little over her forehead. Her eyes bright, brown eyes fixed on his thin sickly drawn face.

“Irish,” responded Finneas, thankful to have something to say.

“Oh, that’s nice. I have never met an Irishman before,” she said smiling, shaking her head again.

Then the President remembered his initial question that awaited an answer. “Campus, he repeated, do you live on campus?”

“Of yes. It’s much cheaper for me, I am a dorm supervisor.” She sipped her tea, as did the President.

“Ah, that is very good. I am glad you are settling into our campus,” smiled Finneas.

“You live on campus too?” she asked innocently.

The President chuckled a little then replied, “well not exactly. I live in the President’s mansion that is technically off campus.

Another silence.

“Alone in a big house?” asked Chi-Ling, slightly cheeky.

“With my wife and two daughters,” he replied. “And you, how come a student like yourself is already a dorm supervisor?”

“Oh. I am not a student. I am a visiting professor in the new department of Chinese and South Asian studies,” replied Chi-Ling coyly.

“Yes of course! Now I remember. The Provost and I worked to establish that department some years ago and at last it has come to fruition. I trust all is going well there?”

Chi-Ling looked up at Finneas who now had inched closer to her and towered above her. He raised his cup of tea as in a toast. “Let’s drink to the thriving Chinese studies department,” he announced with the confident charm that came naturally to a President.

Laughter, giggling and splashing noises came from the hot tub in the other room.

“Does Professor Garcia have a wife and family also?” asked Chi-Ling with an air of false innocence.

“You mean Ted the Red? Oh Yes,” answered the President with a similar smile. “I have known him and his family for many years. We met in my prison when I was Warden of Sing Sing. He came to visit a client, and we struck up a friendship.”

Finneas looked down at Chi-Ling, trying hard to fix his gaze on her twinkling eyes through his glasses. “And you? I take it you are single if you are a dorm supervisor?”

“Oh, yes. I do not plan to marry. Not yet at least. There is too much life to enjoy with a freedom that may one day suddenly be taken from us. At least that is the way we look at things in Taiwan, living as close as we do to China.”

This lapse into serious conversation brought another silence. This time eventually broken by Finneas. “Can I give you a ride back to campus?”

“Oh Thank you...”

“It’s nothing...”

“I mean you don’t need to. Professor Garcia said he would...”

“I would not count on that. He’s not getting out of that hot tub any time soon, or if he does, well, he won’t be driving anywhere, if you see what I mean.” Finneas gave his Presidential look to Chi-Ling who understood immediately.

“All right. It is very kind of you,” she said with a very bright smile.

Finneas and Chi-Ling did not bother to thank their host or to say their good-byes. It would have interrupted what was obviously a very happy and joyous scene. Instead they slipped out the back door and walked to the President’s car, such as it was. Finneas saw no reason to buy an expensive car, since he was mostly driven around by the university driver and campus car both of which, in those days, were a perk that came with every presidential university job. No such luxury these days.

The President held open the passenger door of his 1978 Toyota Tercel, and ushered Chi-Ling into the front seat. He went round to the driver side and pushed the seat forward so he could get his walking stick into the back seat. It had snowed during the day, but now a warm front had moved in and a light rain thankfully washed away the ice from the car windshield, and more importantly, the ice that had collected on the roads. He drove with some difficulty because of his disabled leg, and Chi-Ling was tempted to offer to drive, but thought better of it. In any case, it was only a ten minute drive to the campus.

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It was very dark, the drizzle causing a mist to settle over the



campus, the four dorm towers hardly visible, and the headlights of the car reflecting back from the mist making it difficult to see the road ahead. They drove in silence, Chi-Ling preferring to leave it to her new friend to navigate the roads. The President had only one thought in mind. Actually it was not a thought. It was something else.

“We’re about there,” he said, breaking the silence. “The north east tower, I think you said?”

“Yes, thank you. It’s so kind of you.” Chi-Ling leaned into him and placed her tiny hand on the thigh of his disabled leg.

The campus roads had been cleared, so there would be no snow ploughs to bother them. The lighting was almost non-existent around the campus, it being the heart of winter, and the university on an energy saving plan. Finneas pulled off to the side of the road that approached the rear of the dormitory.

“This will do fine,” crooned Chi-Ling. She leaned forward and turned to face his withered and drawn face. “It is so very kind of you,” she said, and gave him a light kiss on his balding forehead, mimicking a quick kiss good-bye. Yet it was a kiss, and could quite easily be taken for something other than a good-bye and thank you.

Finneas, mindful of his Catholic upbringing that was easily neutered by his Irish temperament, placed the car in Park with a sweaty hand, then placed his hand behind her head and returned her kiss with the biggest one he could manage, given his tight thin lips, placed squarely on her open mouth.

To quote someone. This was the start of something great.

The car engine appeared to rev itself up of its own accord, as did its occupants. The warmth of the car’s little heater was enough to bring the two together as the seats of the car made way for their passions. The outside world stopped, as the inside world filled with the scent of sex and the steam of exertion.

“Ó qīn'ài de! Oh dear!” cried out Chi-Ling, chirping like a canary.

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I have reconstructed these events to prepare you for what came to be known as one of the most memorable cases of Colmes, *The Case of Consensual Rape*. Of course, I do apologize for leaving my descriptions of the events in a sort of limbo-climax. At exactly what point of that climax it occurred remains to be

discovered, probably it never will be, the mundane reason being that at the point of consensual contact between the two lovers, shall we say with some charity, there was a tap of metal on the driver side window door. And a distant, heavy voice called, “Open up!” Open up!”

All action stopped in mid climax. Steam turned to water trickling down the window. And through that window the President made out the dark shape of a campus police officer. It was the newly appointed campus security officer, a cop retired from the local police force, obediently doing his rounds of the campus. Cars had to be parked in the car park, not on the side of campus roads. For a moment he was tempted to simply drive off. But thought better of it. The President lowered the window and looked at the officer who immediately recognized him.

“Oh! Sorry sir!” called the officer, highly embarrassed and amused. But he did have the foolish presence of mind to shine his very bright flashlight into the car and thus light up the beautiful Chi-Ling, who quickly covered her eyes and chest, squinting under the sudden light.

“I’m on my way home, officer, Larry, I think, isn’t it? Larry Cordner?”

“That’s right sir. Thank you sir. Sorry to bother you sir.”

“And thank you officer for doing your duty in such a mature manner,” said the President, “I’ll be on my way.”

Without thinking, Chi-Ling went to get out of the car, which prompted the officer to offer his services. “I can see you into the dorm, miss. I have a big umbrella.”

The president swallowed, an attempt to stop himself from telling the cop to get the hell out of it. Instead, he said, “thank you Larry that’s very kind of you.” He gave Chi-Ling a little prod and she obeyed. “Not a word of this to anyone, including your superiors, you understand?”

Larry certainly understood. His time as a cop had taught him that you obey your seniors without question.

“Of course,” he answered with a little salute to drive home his obedience.

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A couple of weeks after the great tub party, I received a light knock on the wall of my office, but no call of “Hobs” that usually accompanied the knock. Over the past few days I had heard dull

noises of what sounded like serious talk coming from Colmes's office, but I knew better than to go in and ask him what was going on. Anyway, I was reasonably sure I knew what might be happening. Being still a graduate student, beyond my duties as Colmes's research assistant, I was privy to the rumors and scuttlebutt that floated around among the students. It was all fun fare which I enjoyed hearing on and off and enjoyed passing on, though usually not to Colmes unless he asked me directly. And when I caught a glimpse of the campus cop Larry coming out of Colmes's office, I thought there must be something afoot. Then again, I knew that Colmes received a weekly report from campus security of any incidents, crimes or delinquencies, security breaks and the like. Usually petty stuff. Colmes went out of his way to have close ties with the campus security people, given that they had certain powers sometimes of persuasion, that he could make use of. Generally speaking, I knew from my criminal justice studies that police had trouble making friends outside the policing fraternity. So Colmes was a perfect friend for a cop. He was sometimes mistakenly identified as some kind of cop, an investigator, the latter of which is fair enough. But on the other hand his official title on campus was academic, a interdisciplinary Professor. So, he was able to move comfortably within both circles.

On the third soft knock, I walked out of my office and through the already open door to find Colmes walking around his office, pushing at the overstuffed chair, grabbing my wicker hair and putting it down in different places.

"No, it won't do," said Colmes.

"What's up?" I asked in a chirping manner, then realizing that I had not comprehended the seriousness of Colmes's demeanor.

"The next few days are going to be extremely nerve-racking, Hobson. No doubt you have already absorbed the biggest rumor of the week from your licentious student friends," he frowned, though I could see that there was an element of amusement in his twitching mouth.

"You mean Ted the Red's hot tub party?" I asked with a big grin.

"Tell me, Hobson. Tell me all, and I will set you right if I get the slightest whiff of exaggeration or outright fantasy,"

proclaimed Colmes.

"Nothing much really, at least nothing that we, or you, should or could be involved in. Just one of the girls, an undergrad I think, has lodged a complaint with human resources, I suppose that's Tochiarty's office, complaining that Ted forced her to get naked and get into the hot tub."

"Did she mean physical force?" probed Colmes.

"Not clear. Might have been. But then it seems that President O'Brien was also there, along with someone they all said was his sweetheart, Chi-Ling. And he didn't do anything about it. How does that sound? About right?"

"His sweetheart?" asked Colmes, of course knowing that he need not mention that O'Brien was married with two daughters in high school. "Based on what?"

"It seems that he and Chi-Ling didn't bother with the hot tub and hung out in the kitchen and then left together. So..."

"Go on, Hobson, give it to me," pressed Colmes.

"Well, nothing really. All fantasy and speculation of what they would look like, you know, together...you know her?"

"Chi-Ling? I don't think so. Just appointed as visiting assistant professor in the new Chinese studies department, right?" asked Colmes as he walked round and round the office, moving my chair this way and that, trying to push the overstuffed chair further into the corner.

I continued my previous train of thought. "She wouldn't even be half his size, if you see what I mean," I said with an admittedly smirky grin.

"Hmmm. Very interesting and fascinating to conjecture, eh Hobson?" quipped Colmes.

"Indeed. Indeed," I answered this time with a bigger grin.

"Hobson I need a few more chairs in here like yours, and the overstuffed chair removed temporarily," instructed Colmes, "and lend me a hand to lift the overstuffed chair. Maybe put it in your office for the moment? There may be just enough room there."

And to my amazement, Colmes marched up to the chair, lifted it up from the front end and dragged it effortlessly out of his office and into mine.

"You have at least three chairs in your kitchen, don't you?" I asked him. Not waiting for an answer, I hurried through door two down the narrow passage to the kitchen. There were four old

chrome kitchen chairs. “Are you sure you want to use these? They’re a bit old,” I noted. “How many are coming, anyway? And why crammed into your office? Oh, and by the way, who is it that is coming?”

“You are most inquisitive. It may be that you will not be able to attend, unless you stand in a corner and say nothing,” answered Colmes hastily.

“And when are they coming?” I persisted. My mentor was teasing me.

“Initially, just the president and Chi-Ling. Indeed, I am hoping it will be only them. I made it clear that none of the other persons of interest was welcome. You know my rule. Two is about right for an interrogation, more than that is a crowd as they say.”

I looked at my impossible mentor, puzzled. “If it’s just the President and Chi-Ling, why aren’t you meeting in his office?”

Colmes sighed. “Hobson, young man, surely you can see that the President has gotten wind from the rumor-mill of his suspected dalliance with Chi-Ling. They do not want to be seen together. There is no way Chi-Ling could go to his office without many people noticing. It would stoke the scandal mongering ever so more.”

“Then why the four chairs, removal of the overstuffed chair, and actually, why are you involved at all?” I asked almost insolently.

“Because there is one other small piece of information that you apparently have not heard from your student gossips. Larry, the campus cop, is involved. I have been meeting with him on and off over the past few days. It’s, shall I say, sensitive.”

“Now this is beginning to sound like fun,” I exclaimed with a boyish laugh.

“Indeed. Indeed,” grunted Colmes as he placed all four kitchen chairs plus my wicker chair in a slightly curved row facing his desk.

“It looks like five against one,” I observed caustically.

“One against five would be more accurate,” Colmes corrected.

I was about to express my agreement wholeheartedly when the office door swung open and Larry the campus cop walked in.

“The door was open,” he said apologetically.

“No matter. You have more to tell me?” asked Colmes a little concerned.

“Only that there was something that Chi-Ling whispered to me, or I think she did when I helped her out of the car and walked her to the back door of the dorm.”

“Do tell us, my good man,” said Colmes in his most friendly manner.

Larry looked across to me then back at Colmes.

“Don’t worry. I was just leaving,” I said.

But Colmes insisted. “No stay. It is time that you learned some of the background to this evolving crisis. And I assure you, officer, that my outstanding colleague here can be trusted without the slightest doubt.”

Larry cleared his throat a little, then mumbled, “she said something to the effect that she was not raped and even if she was, she would deny it.”

“You are sure about this?” pressed Colmes.

“Not really. As I said, I do not remember the exact words she said, but what I just told you is the gist of it.” Larry fidgeted, then stepped back as if to leave. But just as he turned, President O’Brien entered, limping worse than usual, thumping the end of his walking stick heavily on the concrete floor as he took each uncertain step.

Colmes hurried forward but stopped half way. He did not want to insult the President by offering to help him walk, something he had done unaided for some two decades now. “Here, Mr. President, take my chair,” he said as he gestured to the chair behind his desk.

The President did not hesitate and took the offer as his due. He was used to this treatment, and by golly, he expected it.

Larry, clearly uncomfortable, made to leave again, but just as he reached the open door, Chi-Ling appeared, her sweet smile and beautiful dark eyes riveting him to the spot. The President stayed seated and extended his hand. “Come my love, take a seat,” he almost purred, his nasal voice as soft as he could make it. Chi-Ling bowed a little to him, then turned to each of us in turn and nodded slightly as if to bow. Now it was my turn to try and leave, but again Colmes intervened. He walked over to me and muttered, “stay, but I want you to take copious notes of the meeting as it goes forward.” I nodded, then took my leave to

return to my office to collect notepad and pen. Because of his dyslexia, pens and notebooks did not exist in Colmes's office at the time. The pencil and the *Times* crossword puzzle were all for show.

I carefully closed the door on my return, and took my place on the wicker chair that Colmes had left in its usual place at the corner of his desk, to the President's left. Colmes then placed himself on the kitchen chair to the President's far right. Chi-Ling sat immediately opposite her darling Finneas. Larry, even more agitated, stood where the overstuffed chair used to be.

"Now then, said the President, "Chi-Ling has a little something to say, but before she does, Professor Colmes, I want to thank you for making yourself and your pleasant office available to us."

Colmes nodded, his face expressionless, "you are most welcome," he said.

Chi-Ling then looked round the room and said, "I want to thank dear Mr. Policeman..."

"Call me Larry..."

"...Larry for having helped me out of Finneas's car and into my dorm apartment during that awful freezing rain and ice and snow," she said in her tweety voice."

Larry nodded. "Just doing my duty, Ma'am."

Colmes looked straight at the President who smiled approvingly.

Chi-Ling continued. "I have been upset and insulted by the rumors that have swept through the campus like a storm of its own. I was not raped, or if I was, it was at my request," she said calmly. "We fell in love at first sight, and will be married as soon as, ..."

"I can arrange my divorce which is already in motion," added Finneas.

"My congratulations!" proclaimed Colmes as though he were the preacher marrying them, "but why have you come to me to tell me this?"

A very good question, I thought to myself. Why on earth? What does it have to do with Colmes?

"Mr. Colmes, I know from my experience as a precinct commander of police in Taipei that one must seek out and identify persons of interest who you know wield much power. I

have determined that you are such a person,” said Chi-Ling in a steady and certainly stronger voice. She was no longer a canary.

“I am flattered, Chi-Ling, indeed I am. But what is it that I must do for you? Even I cannot stop or prevent rumors and scandal from moving through the campus like an infectious disease,” said Colmes in his most serious tone. He looked to Finneas for an answer, but quickly saw that this was all up to Chi-Ling. I gave Colmes a knowing look. We both suspected that she was doing this against the President’s wishes.

Chi-Ling was about to explain when the noise of a key unlocked Colmes’s door and in walked Tochiarty, followed by an assistant, an African American, probably from Ethiopia, thought Colmes, who had to bow his head slightly to get through the doorway, he was so tall. He looked like, and probably was, a basketball player. Tochiarty barged forward and plonked herself down beside Colmes and beckoned her assistant to sit next to her.

Tochiarty wasted no time. “I am informing you officially right now, she said to the President, that I am filing a formal charge of rape against you, on behalf of Miss Chi-Ling Chen.”

The president remained in Colmes’s chair, unmoved, sullen.

“On what evidence?” asked Colmes, the authority in his voice bouncing off the walls of his office.

“I will answer that,” offered the basketball player in a deep voice. “It’s what we call structural rape.”

“What?” asked Colmes incredulous.

Tochiarty interdicted. “My apologies, I should have introduced my colleague who is director of our department of critical race theory.”

The room fell silent. The basketball player spoke up. “My name is Washington Bates.”

Colmes was about to take over, when none other than Professor Theodore Garcia walked through the open door. “Sorry I’m late,” he said, “traffic on the Northway.”

“Have a seat,” invited Colmes, pointing to the one vacant chair next to me.

Feeling overwhelmed by excessive height, I decamped to the corner with my wicker chair.

Professor Garcia took his place next to Mr. Bates. They were about the same height. “I’ll say right out now,” he said aggressively, “that nothing untoward happened at my hot tub



party. All the rumors you hear are just that, the product of the rich imagination driven by wishful thinking that is typical of students.”

Tochiarty twisted around in her seat so that she could confront Garcia. After Colmes, he was her biggest enemy whom she also had promised that she would “get” some day. “Professor Garcia,” she pronounced. “the whole hot tub party tradition should be erased from our university. It is an insult and serious threat to the welfare of innocent students. My assistant here is looking into it, and you can expect a summons any day now.”

Ted the Red laughed. “Summons? What a laugh. You have no idea what you are doing, and you sure are not a prosecutor or whatever. You have no legal standing at all.”

To any normal person, that would have been enough to put them in place. But not Tochiarty. She handed Ted a paper. “Maybe this will shut you up. It is my formal complaint in my capacity as Schumaker University Human Resources Director, to be laid before the Schumaker County District Attorney today.”

This created a buzz of excitement. “Give me that,” demanded the President, and Ted quickly handed it to him, at which The President tore it up, and threw the pieces in Colmes’s bin.

The room fell silent again. It was time for Colmes to take over.

“The theory is the evidence,” said Bates out of nowhere. “Gender is the same as race,” he announced as though it were a law unto itself. “It is structured into capitalist, that is, slave society. In my position as owner of slave or like today owner of the means of production, anything I ask my slave to do, they have no choice but to do it. Unavoidably it is an abuse of power, exploitation of the weak, no matter whether I treat them with kindness of pay high wages.”

“If that is so,” said Colmes, “then it is not possible for a man and a woman to have sex without one raping the other,” insisted Colmes. “Because it is the male who penetrates the female, it is the female who takes it in, no matter the aggression of either party. God or Darwin have made it so,” Colmes announced in a quasi-religious tone. “The physiology of humans is such that it is not possible for a male and a female to be equals. The one must dominate the other at some point if they are to make children, or

if they have decided, simply to enjoy its pleasure. It is a battle of ups and downs.”

“Thank you for the sermon,” said Tochiarty sarcastically. “It does not change a thing. A rape has occurred. Chi-Ling’s innocence has been exploited by the most powerful person on campus. If she says she “wanted it” or however she describes the experience, no matter. If they had sex, then it is a simple matter of rape by the powerful man over the powerless woman.”

“And I would add,” said Bates, “that even if they did not have sex, the simple fact that The President drove the defenseless Chi-Ling home in his car late at night is enough evidence to support a charge of attempted rape.”

All present wriggled uncomfortably. Larry had inched his way closer and closer to the door. He wanted to get out of this oven of madness. But it was my indefatigable mentor Thomas Colmes who settled the matter.

Colmes leaned across his desk and whispered something to the President. I now of course know what he whispered, but at the time I was thoroughly bamboozled. Anyway, his whisper had the effect of bringing on a great ear-to-ear smile on the President’s otherwise drawn and haggard looking face. His eyes glowed with excitement and satisfaction. I did my best to look sideways to see if Chi-Ling had reacted in any way. But she was still smiling and sweet. Then Colmes disturbed everything by standing, and then asking everyone else to stand and to please move their chairs away from the desk and place them against the side wall. He reached out to Chi-Ling who pulled out a small rather tattered book from her handbag. At first I thought it was a bible, but then on closer inspection it appeared to be a Chinese book. Perhaps a Chinese version of the bible. I later discovered that it was the I-Ching.

She gave it to Colmes who held it in his hand as though he were a presbyterian minister.

Bates thought he knew what was going on. “You can swear on any book you like that you were not raped, it makes no difference. Swearing on ten bibles will not change the facts. And the facts are that you are female and he is male, and more importantly, he is your boss and you are his servant, or let’s just sum it up by saying you are his voluntary slave.”

All in the room stared at Bates as though he were a mad

extremist, that is except Tochiarty. “Isn’t he wonderful?” she said proudly. “And to think I hired him.”

I was poised to ask her whether that made him her slave. But thought better of it. In any case, Colmes started to move about the room. His movement had loosened up the attendees and a little casual talk started to emerge. Ted leaned over to the President and said, “thanks for coming the other night, even if you didn’t try the water.”

“Too hot for me!” said Finneas, “but only too happy to take advantage of the opportunity to give Chi-Ling a good time and to introduce her to American academia.”

“And I hear that she did have a good time,” grinned Ted.

Finneas had already moved on to chat informally with others who were in the room. Colmes passed by me and pushed a note into my hand. “Larry can help you,” he said nodding in Larry’s direction.

The note said, “bring flowers from office.” At first I thought this was one of Colmes’s coded messages. But when I got to the door of my office, the door was open and there before me was the biggest bouquet of flowers I had ever seen. Too much for one person to carry, so now I knew why he suggested that Larry would help.

We returned from my office laden with flowers which, on Colmes’s direction, we placed on his desk, and they completely covered it. Ted quickly stepped out of the way as did Bates and they naturally started to chat about basketball. Chi-Ling stood, smiling sweetly, her eyes following Finneas as he made his way to the front of the desk on Colmes’s direction.

Tochiarty was astonished at how quickly the dreadful charges of rape that were laid just a few minutes ago, appeared to have disappeared over the horizon. She sat there, stubbornly refusing to move, convinced that the whole meeting had been carefully engineered by Colmes to push the charge, actually even the idea, of rape away. To bury it. “Flowers,” she mocked, “you think you can soften us with flowers? Typical male sexism at its worst!” she pronounced as she huffed, and finally stood away from the desk. Actually she was kind of nudged away by Colmes who was arranging the flowers on the desk so that they completely covered it.

Satisfied with the flowers, Colmes took Chi-Ling by the

hand, and brought her together with Finneas so that they stood before the flower laden desk. He then gave them the book for each to hold and announced:

“I bring before you all here today, the loving couple, Finneas and Chi-Ling who are joined by the wisdom of the I Ching that says:

*When two people are at one:  
in their inmost hearts,  
they shatter even the strength of iron or bronze.  
And when two people understand each other  
in their inmost hearts,  
their words are sweet and strong,  
like the fragrance of orchids.*

Colmes then placed his hand on theirs and the I Ching.

“Do you, Finneas O’Brien and Chi-Ling Chen take each other as your lawfully wedded mate, to have and to hold until death do you part?”

“We do,” they answered softly, Chi-Ling looking up at her President, he looking down, whispering, his lips barely moving.

Colmes stood back and faced the tiny, puzzled audience, and announced, “as the official celebrant at this divine moment, according to the power invested in me by the State of New York, I pronounce you a married couple brought together by biology and love for each other. You may now kiss!”

“What happened to man and wife?” whispered Ted in my ear. I answered only with a grin.

“This changes nothing,” proclaimed Tochiarty, aware a little too late that the brief, poignant ceremony had softened the onlookers’ hearts.

Ted whispered into my ear again. “I thought he was married with two kids?”

I shrugged.” I guess he's divorced,” I said saying the obvious.

Then Tochiarty approached us with caution. “This doesn’t change anything, you know.”

Ted couldn’t resist the bait and took up the necessary cudgel.

“And when she has a baby, it will be the direct product of a rape?”

“Can’t argue with nature,” she said defensively.

Ted’s lawyerly logic came to the fore. “So we are all the

direct products of rape?" he said with a gotcha smirk.

Colmes, with his incredible hearing, from the other side of the room intervened. "Nature doesn't know what rape is. In fact nature doesn't know anything. Nature just does."

Larry gave me a look as if to say, "these eggheads are too much for me," and slipped away, waving to Colmes as he went. Colmes nodded his assent.

Then Bates had to have his say. "I'm black, you know."

"You don't say?" offered Ted laced with a heavy dose of sarcasm, "and I'm a white basketball player, you know the kind, the ones that can't jump."

Bates screwed up his face not knowing whether to laugh at what may have been a self-effacing joke, or more likely was an example of language violence, as he was taught last year in his graduate Justice and Equity seminar. "I was just making the point that gender is the same as race, or is that too difficult for a lawyer to understand?" said Bates, aggressively.

"You should come to my next hot tub party then you will learn that gender trumps race any day." And with that parting shot, Ted shook hands with his old mate Finneas, gave Chi-Ling a kiss on her flushed cheek, nodded to Colmes and left.

Tochiarty had watched and heard all that happened between her young assistant director Bates and that disgusting excuse for a lawyer, Garcia. Now the next thing was truly incredible to me. Maybe there's something about marriage ceremonies that softens even the hardest of hearts. She put her arm around Bates, to the extent that she, small and stocky, could, her head reaching not that far above his navel, and said, "don't take any notice of him, the taller they are the harder they fall, you know," then frowned to herself realizing too late that Bates was taller than O'Brien.

Bates was fortunately not listening to his boss. He was eyeing off Chi-Ling and was smitten by her Asian beauty. "May I kiss the bride?" he asked no one in particular.

"Don't ask me," said the President with a big smile, "ask Chi-Ling herself."

Chi-Ling stood on tippy toes and raised her head as high as she could. Bates leaned down and managed to place a kiss where her glistening dark hair met the top of her forehead. Tochiarty looked on with considerable displeasure. Then departed without a word. She knew that her job inevitably made enemies for her.

And she also knew that if she tried to do something about Colmes and this latest cheap trick of his, to right the terrible wrong done to Chi-Ling by the President himself, she would lose her job and nobody on campus would give a damn. What she had not foreseen, and should have, was that the loving couple were not done yet. Not by a long way. Right now there were just the happy couple, a bright future ahead, Phineas would make sure of that.

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Colmes and myself were now alone in his office. Colmes looked most satisfied. He had transformed what could have been the worst scandal of the year on campus, into a pleasant and happy circumstance. He was not quite done yet, for door one opened and in came Rose the Younger carrying a large tray of cupcakes made to look like mini wedding cakes, a large floral teapot of tea, matching cups and saucers, and of course, her knitting tucked under her arm.

“Thank you Rose,” smiled Colmes as he took the tray and placed it on his desk beneath the flower arrangements. Colmes took it upon himself to pour the tea. “Who takes milk?” he asked.

The story might well end happily there. But there was much more happiness to come for the loving couple. You may wonder why the Provost was not invited to the wedding ceremony. In fact she was, but declined, because of her anger with the President. He had, this very day, informed her that the department of Chinese and South Asian studies was to be upgraded to a new School of its own, and Chi-Ling would be appointed its Dean.

I often wondered whether Colmes really did have a celebrant’s license. He did produce the necessary marriage forms that Rose the Younger and I signed as witnesses over our cups of tea. And he once remarked to me, when someone questioned whether he was a real detective or not, that indeed he had a New York License to practice as a private detective and that it was nowhere near as difficult qualify for, compared to becoming a New York State approved Celebrant.

