

Accepting Jenna

Winfried Garrett had been a professor longer than most professors had been alive. His physical appearance was that of a squat man, with a roundness to his torso that looked out of place on his 5 foot 7 inch frame. He was not exactly fat; more like a perfectly proportioned six-footer that God had accidentally made too short. His hair was 'Einsteinian' in appearance, coarse and gray in color with longish, kinky strands that projected perpendicular from his scalp in almost every direction. On more than one occasion a smart-alecky undergraduate had asked if his barber owned a Van De Graaf generator.

Winfried's current capacity was Professor Emeritus of 'Time Research' at the main campus of Ohio State University. He had spent his entire academic career at OSU, most recently doing research into nonlinear astrophysical plasmas. To supplement his work, he occasionally taught graduate courses in relativistic fluids and advanced magnetohydrodynamics. He had reached his fill of teaching undergraduates many years ago. The title of *Professor Emeritus* was academia's way of recognizing his years of devoted service, even though he was now officially retired. He had been given a cozy little office and a meaningless research assignment dealing with the relationship between observers, events, space-time and *Special Relativity*.

It was all window dressing. Everyone, including Winfried, knew that his research assignment was a sham. The relationship between time, space and *Special Relativity* had been understood for decades. The *Twin Paradox* and books like Hawking's *A Brief History of Time* had been staple fare for name-dropping, pseudo-scientific, pop culture, wannabe-geniuses for years. Even space exploration activities during the 1960s had

incorporated relativistic time effects into mission calculations. No. Winfried's assignment was not meant to create any real work and it certainly was not expected to produce any real results, meaningful or otherwise. Everything he had been given was no more than a "Thank you" from the 'powers-that-be' for his forty-five years of dedicated service.

Although Winfried did not care one iota that the technical assignment was a facade, he did care about the perquisites that came with his new status. He liked his comfortable little office and he especially enjoyed his unlimited, free access to the university's computing resources. Winfried was seventy-nine years old, yet he was far from being senile or stupid. He had a lassie fare attitude that led him to enjoy this status, where appearances meant everything and substance meant nothing. He had resolved to accept every perk that came his way. In return, he would do nothing except what he wanted to do; when he wanted to do it. Ironically, it was the task of figuring out what he wanted to do that was the most difficult thing now confronting him.

As he sat in his office, contemplating his options, an intruder startled him. Winfried was not accustomed to having his privacy disturbed by unannounced interlopers. He would never have tolerated such behavior when he was an active Professor and he was not about to stand for it in his new position. Full Professor or Emeritus; either way, he demanded to be treated with respect and he was going to get that now. He whipped his head around to see who had entered. The motion was so fast that the intruder was startled and jumped backward. The antique wooden chair upon which Winfried was sitting swiveled around, allowing Winfried's body to catch up with his head.

As Winfried looked upward, his eyes locked onto those of a young female. She was probably less than a quarter of Winfried's age. He glared in anger. She looked either frightened or puzzled. Winfried was not sure which. Either way, he thought he would take advantage of the situation, so he was the first to speak.

"Is your rudeness genetic or a skill that you've acquired?" She hesitated a bit too long for Winfried's liking so he added, "No matter, you're good at it. Probably the only thing you're good at too. Except, of course..."

She interrupted his sentence with an outstretched hand, "Jenna McCarthy, Professor Garrett. Jenna McCarthy's my name."

He ignored her hand. "So, Jenna McCarthy, have you ever heard of the concept of 'knock before entering'?"

"I'm sorry Professor Garrett. It's just that I'm so excited to see you. And I could tell that you were here. The window behind your desk makes your silhouette easily seen on the other side of that frosted glass panel in your door."

Winfried made a mental note to call Maintenance as soon as she left. "Tell me something, Jenna McCarthy. Why do you teenagers insist on wearing those skimpy little tops, with those skimpy little straps — what do you call them, oh yes, 'spaghetti straps' — those things allow the entire world to see your brassier. When I was in high school, girls cared about looking decent and they cared about what other people thought about their looks too."

"I'm not a teenager Professor Garrett. I'm 23, or at least I will be next week." Jenna stood 5' 5". She had shoulder length blond hair with a slight bob at the end. Her 108 pounds were nicely distributed but she had too little body fat to create what most men would call a 'good figure'. In moments of honesty, even Jenna would admit that her small bust and slender appearance made her look more like 17 than 22.

"Does this mean you're a student here at OSU, Miss McCarthy?" Winfried queried.

"Yes. I'll be graduating at the end of my next term," Jenna responded. "In fact, part of the reason that I'm so happy to be here, to be here in your office, is that I've found you before I graduate. But then, I need to explain a few things in order that you can understand."

Winfried Garrett was not the sort of man to allow himself to be patronized by anyone and especially not by a woman young enough to be his great granddaughter. "Miss McCarthy. There's very little that I don't already understand. For the past 55 years, this university has paid me for *knowing things*. I can tell just by looking at you that you're not a student in any of our science or engineering faculties. Education? Perhaps. Or maybe Phys-Ed. No. Not Phys-Ed. You don't have enough meat on your bones for that. What is your field of study Miss McCarthy?"

"I'm in the faculty of *Human Behavior* with a major in *Political Correctness* and a minor in *Women's Studies*". The tone of Jenna's reply was matter-of-fact. It never occurred to her that Professor Garrett would hear her words any differently.

To Jenna's surprise, Winfried let out a belligerent roar. "You're majoring in *WHAT! Political Correctness?* At a university! At *THIS* university! You've got to be joking."

"No, Professor Garrett. I'm not joking. And it's *Ms.* McCarthy not *Miss*. Jenna remained cool, at least in the 'calm and collected' sense of the word. It was early August in Columbus and Winfried's office seemed to be lacking air conditioning.

"Does this so-called faculty of *Human Behavior* teach you any mathematics?" fumed Winfried. "Do you know anything about Lorentz transformations? Do have any idea about the use or importance of Fourier Series analysis? Do you understand the importance of worldlines and light cones in Minkowskian space-time. Do you..."

Jenna saw little point in letting his rant continue. "Professor Garrett, I've never taken that kind of mathematics. Of course I don't know anything about those concepts."

Winfried's glasses began sliding down his nose and his eyes turned into squinting slits. He stared Jenna directly in the eye. "Just how much mathematics have you studied Miss McCarthy?"

"I took a half-year of algebra in high school," Jenna countered. "When I found out that most universities don't impose mathematical prerequisites for students entering

their faculties of *Human Behavior*, I decided to take political science the remainder of that year."

"Oh my God." Winfried's words were eighty percent amazement and twenty percent exasperation. "The world is in even worse shape than I thought. Goodbye *Enlightenment*. Hello *Dark Ages*."

"Do you want me to leave Professor Garrett?" Jenna's composure was remarkable in the face of Winfried's tirades.

Winfried's response was acerbic. "I didn't want you to come here in the first place. Of course I want you to leave."

"Then I will. Goodbye Professor..."

Winfried interrupted Jenna before she could finish her sentence. "So you're a quitter too. You've surprised even me, Miss McCarthy, by giving up so easily. When you burst in here, you created the impression that you were on a mission of considerable importance. Don't you think you should finish it?" Winfried didn't care that his psychology was amateurish. He enjoyed pushing things to the limit.

"When I came here Professor, I thought that I would like you. I don't." Jenna's eyes were locked on Winfried's. She showed intensity rather than anger. She never blinked as she spoke. "I see that the reputation you've built with the undergraduates in your faculty is well-deserved. You're an arrogant bully. After being so rude, why are you now suggesting that I should stay?"

"Call it intuition." Winfried's curiosity began to overcome his belligerence. "Sit down Ms. McCarthy. Tell me why you've come here."

She accepted his offer. She sat with both feet on the floor, balancing her body on the front edge of the single wooden chair that was lodged sideways between the front of Winfried's desk and his massive bookcase. "Your current research assignment deals with the study of time and relativity. Is that correct?"

"Yes." Winfried's curiosity was starting to dull his caustic edges.

"So you must also be interested in time-travel; moving forward and backward in time. Is that correct?" Jenna showed remarkable composure given that she knew Winfried would consider time-travel to be absurd.

"No. No. No. Time-travel is nonsense. You've rented *Back To The Future* once too often Ms. McCarthy. Time-travel is the stuff of science fiction, not the stuff of science." Winfried drove his point home with force, yet he restrained his oversized ego, if only a tad. "I study time using complex equations and mathematical theorems; not souped-up DeLoreans."

"It seems, Professor, that you only study time-travel but I do it."

Winfried squirmed ever so slightly in his chair. His face remained expressionless, save for an imperceptible narrowing of his eyes. It was the only hint that he was concerned for Jenna's sanity. He did not speak.

"That's how I located you, Professor Garrett. Sometime I'll tell you the details."

"OK, Jenna. I'll play along. Supposing that you could — and did — travel in time, why would such an experience lead you to me? Are you looking to be paid for telling me what you've learned? Are you looking for fame? Do you want to be published? What is it that you want Jenna?"

Jenna glanced briefly upward at Winfried's age-yellowed ceiling before replying. "What do I want? That's a difficult question, Professor Garrett." She paused and then continued. "Last night I was time-traveling. My consciousness was part of the summer of 1942."

Winfried's concern for Jenna's welfare jumped a quantum higher. His certainty about her mental instability was now overlaid with a growing fear for her personal safety.

Jenna continued. "Why do you think that adopted children seek out their birth parents? If you can answer me that question, Professor, I'll tell you what I want."

Winfried did his best to remain calm despite the irrationality around him. He decided to 'play along' with Jenna until he could unobtrusively call campus security. "To understand their roots, I suppose. But what's that got to do with you and I?" Despite his preoccupation with how to best get the police to his office, part of Winfried's mind realized where Jenna was headed with her questions. It caused a look of incredulity to begin spreading across his face. "No Jenna! If you're looking for your birth parents you're way off course. I'm more than 55 years your senior and I've been a bachelor all of my life. I have no family; no one. And I'm certainly not your father. That fact is absolute and irrevocable; time-travel or no time-travel."

Jenna seemed oblivious to the insistent tone of Winfried's outburst. "My father was born in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, March 14, 1947. My mother was born here, in Columbus, Ohio, on May 2, 1943. I know who my parents are, Professor. My one regret is that I wish they were still with me. I lost them two years ago in a car crash that I'd rather not discuss."

"I'm sorry Jenna." Winfried's sincerity was obvious despite his preoccupation with Jenna's mental instability.

"Where were you, Professor Garrett, in July 1942?"

Winfried remained silent.

Jenna remained unfazed. "Perhaps you'd like to time-travel with me and experience that summer again."

That was enough. Jenna had referred to time-travel once too often. It was Winfried's cue to call campus security, despite his concerns about how Jenna might react. To his surprise, Jenna remained tranquil as he placed the call. Winfried asked to have a security officer sent to his office as quickly as possible. He cringed when he was told that it would be at least thirty minutes before they arrived — something about giving precedence to controlling a student protest against tuition exemptions for athletes. As Winfried completed the call, his eyes turned once again toward Jenna. He was puzzled

by her indifference. He had expected a reaction. Winfried would bide his time until security arrived.

#

Jenna repeated her earlier question, "The summer of 1942, Professor. Where were you?"

"I don't know where I was Jenna. That's far too long ago for me to be able to remember one year from another." Winfried could tell that Jenna expected more, so he thought a bit harder. "Let's see. That was wartime, WW2. As best I can remember, I'd attempted to join the Navy early that year but was rebuffed for some supposed medical deficiency. The real reason was that Uncle Sam already had other plans for me. I was sequestered at Oak Ridge National Lab in Tennessee. My assignment was to develop a neutron-triggered plasma bomb. It never worked out. As history subsequently revealed, the Site-X team at Oak Ridge and their Manhattan Project colleagues at other locations beat us to the punch with their atomic bomb. It was all pretty discouraging in the end. After the war ended, the government gave up on the idea of a plasma bomb and I came to OSU to teach."

"It must have been difficult for a relatively young man like you, locked-up in the mountains of Tennessee. I can't imagine that there was much to do for recreation." Jenna got to her point, "And no women, I suppose?"

"Actually, there were a few women on the R&D teams. Not like there would be today but there were a few. A handful of women also worked in support services; jobs related to food, lodging and the like." A light went on in Winfried's head. His adrenaline began to flow. He actually forgot that he had called campus security just a few minutes earlier. "Jenna, are you leading up to something?"

"Yes," she replied, "But your expression makes it apparent that you've already figured out my next line of questions. Let's skip the jousting Professor. Do you want to tell me about Nancie or do you want to come with me and experience that summer

again?" Jenna's lungs became almost rigid. She could barely breath as she waited for the Professor's response.

Winfried's entire demeanor was changing as he contemplated the possibilities. He was not a man to put emotions and personal feelings before rational thought. Telling Jenna what he really wanted to say would be a difficult thing to do. He removed his glasses and lay them gently on his desk. After a long silence, Winfried's answer came so softly that Jenna could hardly hear it. "Yes. Jenna, there is nothing in this world that I would enjoy more than seeing Nancie again. I wish with all my heart that your story of time-travel were true but it's not. The only thing that puzzles me is how you've come to know about Nancie."

"Professor," Jenna began, "My guess is that we have only fifteen minutes or so before campus security arrives. Will you devote five of those minutes to hearing me out? You'll have to keep an open mind or there's no point in me saying what I'm about to say."

"Yes, Jenna, I'll give you an honest hearing but I won't abandon reality for wishful thinking. By the way, you have more time than you think. The dispatcher said that security won't get here for at least another half hour."

"Good." For the first time since arriving, Jenna, was more in control of the situation than was Winfried. "Time is an illusion, Professor, an illusion formed by the intersection of the physical world with a metaphysical one. We all know the former, or think that we do. Few of us know the later. You're right, Professor Winfried, in thinking that physical things like that DeLorean in *Back To The Future* are not the tools of time-travel. But you're wrong in thinking that complex mathematics and complicated equations are any better. To travel in time requires the ability to traverse the metaphysical world, not the physical one."

"Jenna," the Professor replied, "I'm honestly trying to understand what you're saying but you're not making any sense. It would be professional suicide for a scientist

or engineer to show the slightest tolerance toward the inclusion of metaphysical parameters within a scientific inquiry. It's against everything that I've ever learned or taught."

"Precisely," countered Jenna, "That's precisely my point. Time-travel isn't a scientific inquiry. But it is real, despite the fact that the tools of science can't see it or feel it or measure it. We're getting nowhere, Professor. Let's travel to 1942. Then we'll talk." Jenna rose from her chair and walked around the end of Winfried's desk. She extended her right arm and spoke gently, "Take my hand Professor."

Winfried leaned forward and began rising from his chair. His out-stretched hand met Jenna's. Immediately as their fingers touched, Winfried lost contact with the world as he had always known it. A tunnel of blinding white light appeared. It shimmered and rotated with the apparent randomness of white noise. There was no sound. Nor was there any feeling of physical reality. There was no sense of time. Winfried was surprised by the overriding calm that pervaded his entire being. He found himself absorbing his experience without analysis. To say that he was enjoying it would be going too far but he was certainly not afraid.

#

As the glare that was blinding Winfried began to vaporize, a sparsely populated diner was revealed — circa the 1940s. The stereotypical chrome-trimmed counter was there, with its stools running the entire length of the building. The size and layout of the customer area resembled an old railway dining car. Perhaps it was. A row of booths ran along the entire front wall except in the exact center, where the entrance door was located. Windows ran the length of the diner, just above the booths. The aisle between the booths and stools was so narrow that people had to turn sideways to pass one another. The kitchen was behind the counter but mostly hidden from the view of customers. The cook looked scruffy and the lone waitress looked tired. There were several men in blue-collar work-wear eating at the counter. A lone couple occupied the

booth at the far end of the diner. She had long blond hair. His was black and short. They were both sitting on the same side of the booth, facing away from the other customers.

Winfried was aware of all this detail yet he knew that he was not physically there. It was as though his consciousness was there but his body was not. An article that he had once read about OBE, or Out of Body Experience, came to mind. The article had been in some doctor's waiting room of all places. Given that it had been the only thing for patients to read, he had done so. It described how people sometimes feel themselves 'floating' outside of their bodies and observing events from a third-person perspective. He had considered it drivel at the time but it was now feeling uncomfortably close to his present experience. The only difference was that the "body" he was "out of" appeared nowhere in the scene before him. He realized that his point of consciousness could be moved about the diner by simply 'thinking it so'. At the moment, he was hovering near the ceiling, just inside the front door.

Winfried sensed Jenna's presence. He could not 'see' her but he knew that she was there. He also knew that he could communicate with her but not via speech in the physical sense. It was rather more like telepathy but without physical bodies to constrain their consciousness. A side benefit from the absence of their normal flesh and blood presence was that neither Winfried nor Jenna could be seen or heard by the people occupying the physical world around them.

Winfried began tentatively, "Where are we Jenna? How did we get here? Where are our bodies? I don't understand. Am I hallucinating?"

"So many questions, Professor. I hope you're not distressed. This must be quite a shock." Jenna's compassion was genuine. "You'll have answers to all your questions in due course. The answer to your last question is 'No'. You're not hallucinating. I've brought you time-traveling. This is July 1942. It's just as I said it would be. See that couple in the far booth over there, with their backs to us? Do you recognize them?"

Winfried remained silent so Jenna continued. "That's you and Nancie. Don't you remember this night? It's the night you first met."

Winfried's perspective on the scene changed with no more than a thought. He had wanted it so and it was. He was looking at himself and Nancie from a point in space somewhere above the booth's empty seat. He felt Jenna at his side. What's more, he and Jenna were looking at his younger self, sitting there beside the only person that he'd ever really loved.

"Yes, Jenna, how could I forget. I recognized the diner the moment I saw it but I was too incredulous to admit that it was so." Winfried did the telepathic equivalent of a sideways glance at Jenna and then continued, "As I look at Nancie and I sitting there, I know it's true. It really is 1942 and I'm here with you watching it all unfold. Can I talk to them, Jenna?"

"No, Professor. You can't." Jenna knew that this was not the time for discussing the principles of time-travel but she needed to make a point. "We're solely in the metaphysical world, while your younger self and Nancie are solely in the physical world. Time-traveling allows us to observe the physical world but we can't interact with it tangibly. We can't change it or even communicate with the people who occupy it."

For the first time in his life, Winfried had zero interest in matters technical. Once he understood that he could not communicate with Nancie, he knew enough. "Why have you brought me here, Jenna?"

"You're not ready for that answer yet, Professor." Jenna was not being difficult or patronizing. She knew that there was a 'right' way to do this. "Professor, I'm going to take you ahead three weeks. Get ready for a mini-version of what you experienced coming here from your office."

#

The glaring light and dizzying blindness returned, only to dissolve into a beautiful moonlit night. Nancie and Winfried's younger self were lying on a blanket, in a grassy

clearing with massive Tennessee hardwoods surrounding them on three sides and the bank of a slowly flowing river on the other. Fireflies were everywhere. The sound of the rippling river was a gentle backdrop for the occasional bullfrog that croaked in the distance. The couple was talking and laughing and about to make love.

Winfried knew this night like it was yesterday. He knew what was going to happen and he was embarrassed to be there with Jenna. Jenna sensed his embarrassment and pulled Winfried forward to Labor Day, 1942. It was the appropriate thing to do. She had no intention of intruding on Winfried's privacy.

#

Winfried was startled by being dragged through time without warning. The feeling passed quickly when he saw his younger self and Nancie standing on the departure platform at the Knoxville train station. As the conductor bellowed "All aboard," Winfried's younger self and Nancie embraced. Their parting kiss was so tender that several strangers on the platform began to stare. Nancie's expression was sad — poignantly so — as she boarded the train. She said her final good-bye with a parting wave.

"Jenna, why have you brought me here to re-live the saddest moment of my life? I loved Nancie. I told her so every day we were together and I did everything in my power to demonstrate my love. But it wasn't enough. She left anyway. She said she had to go back to her parents in Ohio but that never made any sense to me. I never understood it. I know that her love for me was equal to my love for her. So why'd she leave? My friends caulked it up as a 'summer romance' but I know it was far more than that. Never again did I meet a woman who could compare with her. I've never forgotten her, Jenna. Can you tell me why she left?"

Jenna's response was direct. "She left because she loved you." Jenna paused in order for Winfried to contemplate the idea before she continued. "Professor, we need

to make one more stop before our time-traveling is complete." By now, Winfried found the rotating lights and dizziness of time-travel to be almost normal.

#

The customary confusion turned into a diaphanous curtain of whiteness and dissolved away. Winfried and Jenna were again with Nancie but she was not alone.

Nancie was lying in a hospital bed. A middle-aged couple was standing at the foot of the bed. They watched as a nurse gently handed a tiny bundle of pink blankets to Nancie. A baby's face was momentarily visible before Nancie cuddled the child to her breast and began to let it suckle.

Jenna spoke first. She had to. Winfried's ability to communicate was lost to a mixture of amazement, bewilderment and heartache. "Do you understand Professor?" Her semi-rhetorical question was greeted with silence, so she continued. "The baby. It's a girl. And she's yours." Had Jenna been occupying her normal body, she would have had to swallow hard before delivering her next sentence. "And she's my mother."

Winfried was dumbfounded. "I had no idea. Why didn't she tell me? I had no idea."

"I know." Jenna continued, "My grandmother – if you don't mind, Professor, I'm more comfortable calling her 'grandmother' than 'Nancie' – she knew how much you valued your blossoming career. She was young and misjudged the importance of love. She thought it unfair to 'burden' you with the responsibilities of fatherhood and the 'shame' of a wife who had become pregnant before marriage. Things were different back then. I guess you know that better than I."

"None of that would have mattered. My love for Nancie went way beyond such worldly concerns. Who raised my daughter, Jenna?"

"Grandmother and her parents; my great-grandparents. That's them — there at the foot of the bed. The three of them did a great job of it too. My great-grandparents passed away long before I was born but my mother often repeated grandmother's

stories of them. I could tell how much they'd meant to grandmother just from the way my mother spoke."

Winfried's next question was a mixture of sadness and anticipation, "Did your grandmother ever speak of me, Jenna?"

"She died of cervical cancer in the mid-70s, a couple of years before I was born. Until I learned about time-traveling, I'd never seen her. To be honest, Professor, you and I could use time-travel as a way of answering your question but it wouldn't be the right thing to do. What you've seen during this time-trip is pretty much everything that I've seen on my own. I considered traveling more but got queasy about it. I was afraid that it might feel like voyeurism if I began snooping around other people's lives as a sop to my personal curiosity."

"You're wise beyond your years, Jenna." Winfried sensed that their travels had come to an end. "I'm ready."

The dizzying brilliance whirled and Winfried's being was once again blanketed with whiteness.

#

As the cottony cloud evaporated, Winfried found himself sitting in his office chair, with his left elbow and forearm resting on the chair's curved wooden arm. Jenna was standing to his right, with her left arm extended behind his back and her hand resting gently on his shoulder.

Winfried reached into the bottom drawer of his desk and pulled out an old pipe. "It's a meerschaum Jenna. Don't worry. I won't be smoking it. I gave up tobacco years ago. Nancie gave me this pipe as a birthday gift that summer. It was white back then. Years of use turned it into this golden russet. I always thought of your grandmother when I smoked it." Winfried was fondling the smooth meerschaum surface with both hands as he continued. "Since that day that your grandmother said goodbye, this pipe

and some wonderful memories have been the only connection that I've had with her, at least until today"

Jenna felt it important to share with Winfried the obvious, "You realize what all this means don't you? You're my grandfather. Can I call you 'grandfather', Professor?"

Winfried seemed oblivious to her question. He continued to focus on his pipe and the memories attached to it. After almost a minute, he moved the pipe to his left hand and motioned Jenna toward the corner of his desk, "You can sit on my desk if you like."

Jenna rearranged herself as her grandfather had requested but remained standing. They were now facing one another. She reached forward and took his right hand in hers.

Winfried remained seated. He began slowly, "Jenna, until today I've been a very lonely man, not professionally but personally." There was a pause that seemed deliberate, then he proceeded. "Of course you can call me 'grandfather'. Perhaps you'll find this silly but I can already see some of me in you."

Jenna let him finish his sentence but then interrupted, "I would never think you 'silly', grandfather. We're a *team* now. Not only are we blood-related, we both know something that few people in our universe would believe. We know that time-travel is real."

"So we do, Jenna. So we do."

Jenna nodded gently then continued, "Grandfather, I have a plan. This project that you've been given — the one about 'Time Research' — let me work with you to explain how time-travel is done. I could help you crown your career with the greatest technical paper that you've ever published."

Winfried laid his pipe on his desk and turned his gaze toward Jenna. "It would be academic suicide to publish a paper explaining that space-time is accessible by metaphysical means. I would be made a laughing stock for claiming that people can

travel to everywhere and everytime by leaving their physical bodies behind." A look of enlightenment appeared on Winfried's face. "You know that don't you." Winfried smiled at Jenna. "A paper like that would never make it past the first technical adjudicator. It would be *fun* though. I can almost see the look on that adjudicator's pompous face now, as he discovers metaphysical concepts in a paper authored by Professor Winfried Garrett. Consciousness, self-awareness, religion, moral values, intuition — the metaphysical topics that make up life's' truly important questions – these aren't considered the purview of the august journals where I get published, Jenna. It would *knock their socks off!*"

As a sign of agreement, Jenna gave her grandfather's hand a slight squeeze before letting go. "It's a deal grandfather." A puckish smile began unfolding across Jenna's face, "You know, grandfather, you're not such an arrogant bully after all. I'll be back tomorrow. Right now I'd better get out of here. As I recollect, someone called the police on me." Jenna bent over and gave Winfried a peck on the cheek before bouncing out the door.

Winfried pushed back in his chair and smiled. He was still smiling when he heard the knock on his door a half an hour later.

"Campus security, Professor Winfried. You called and said it was urgent."

Winfried rose and opened the door. "Urgent? I called and said it was urgent? Well, let's see. I can't think of anything urgent. Then again, at my age time isn't all that important anyway."

#####

(Questions or comments? — Email: Info@JustUs.ca)