

Kelsey headed back to her office, so distracted that she barely noticed the throngs of holiday shoppers on the SEPTA train. She entered the building, flew past Bruce at the desk, and ran up the stairs.

Tony stepped out of his cubicle as Kelsey careened into him, then practically fell into her own work area.

"Hey, Kel, slow down. I gotta run this by you. Can you look? It's my editorial on confidentiality at sperm banks."

"Not now, Tony."

"It'll just take a sec. It's important, about that website where kids hunt down their sperm donor daddies."

Kelsey ignored him, sat down, punched a computer key, and while waiting impatiently, retrieved papers from her backpack. She then clicked on the "hospice diary - private" icon. The document opened, and she looked rapidly from it to the papers in her hands.

"Whatcha doin'?" Tony squeezed into the cubicle and sat on a stack of magazines.

Kelsey typed furiously. "Comparing things."

"What things?"

"My diary. On Stuart. And the nurses' notes, showing his improvement."

"Improvement? Isn't he supposed to croak?"

"Tony, please, not now. I'll explain just as soon as I see if what I'm thinking is really happening."

"OK." Not taking the hint, Tony flipped through the latest Nature Biotechnology as Kelsey compared playlists to

nurses' notes. Suddenly she jerked backwards and shouted "That's it!"

Tony, startled, fell off the magazine pile. "Yo Kel, take it easy. What's got you so charged up?"

Kelsey pulled out a calendar. Looking from the diary to the notes, she scribbled on a pad that had an outline of a uterus on it, swiped from a reproductive medicine exhibition. Tony looked on as she marked the days that Stuart had improved with a red dot, the days he'd declined with blue, and the days he'd listened to music with green. Finally, she sat back.

"So what's the verdict?"

"Well, Stuart's better days definitely followed my visits. And he backslid tremendously when I went to visit Jen, around Thanksgiving. That's very clear."

"Well, duh. You've given him something to look forward to. Maybe even to live for."

"No. That's not it. Let's not get too sappy. It's not me. I'm just the surrogate marker, as the clinical trials folks might say."

"Then what is it? What's making him better?"

"I think I know."

"I know you think you know. Care to share?"

"It's the music."

"The music?"

"Look. The days that Stuart improved follow the days we heard U2 - except for four times. And on those days, we heard either Coldplay or The Killers."

"OK ... So what?"

"They're the same, Tony. The music. Almost."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, compare U2's "Pride" to Coldplay's "Moses". I'll get it on my iTunes, wait a sec. The riff is superimposable, you'll see."

"Hear. But I still don't get it. Please enlighten me. I don't have your musical expertise."

"Listen a minute." Kelsey clicked on the U2 song, the Coldplay song, and then The Killers' "Somebody Told Me".

"Let me start that last one again. What does the guitar remind you of?"

"U2."

"Exactly."

"So?"

"Tony, you might have me locked up if I told you."

"You have a point there." Tony got up and headed back to his cubicle, shaking his head but smiling.

Kelsey clicked off iTunes and sat back as the cover of the next issue of Biotech USA filled the screen with greenly-glowing, rotating neural stem cells, giving new life to an injured brain.