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Heterochromia

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Abstract

This short fiction, with a dystopic vision, is set in a future Toronto, devastated by social unrest and a nuclear disaster, while the action of the story explores a retired librarian's conflict with a repressive censorship authority.

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Heterochromia

by John Tavares

As Warren rode the commuter train downtown, he joined two homeless straphangers in watching the news on the government-sanctioned news billboard on the train. The report was about a case thrown out of court after a member of the riot control squad was acquitted of extrajudicial homicide. The unarmed suspect allegedly instigated a food riot. The sole witness testified that the police officer who fired the fatal shot had blue eyes, but the police officer in question had a condition known as complete heterochromia, or “heterochromia iridis,” with the iris of her eyes drastically contrasting in color. The judge threw out the eyewitness’ testimony, and, as Warren listened to the reasons broadcast on streaming video, the train creaked and rattled into decrepit Yonge subway station, where he disembarked.





Outside the decaying subway station on Bloor Street, Warren fielded a cellphone call from his daughter, Paula. He learned he had an offspring only recently. In what seemed like a lifetime ago, during his last college year, Warren donated semen once a month to college friends, but he had a falling out with the lesbian couple. The dispute originated in a perceived failure to return pricey textbooks in a timely fashion, before examinations when he most needed them. Until his own daughter showed up at his apartment several years ago, he had never heard from the couple or discovered if the donations led to conception. Paula explained that her parents were killed during the reactor disaster and radioactive poisoning. They lived right next door to the nuclear power station. Young Paula and mature Warren went to a hassle-free black market laboratory for genetic tests, which confirmed what their distinct facial resemblances informed them: she was his daughter.

Now, as Warren walked south along Yonge Street, his phone connection to his daughter was filled with the crosstalk of police and paramilitary hunting down stray insurgents and anarchists. He thought Paula was taking a chance by calling him when the intelligence community and police agencies were likely eavesdropping. She asked him when he would drop by her apartment in Etobicoke. Having not seen him in months, she wanted to show him her home-based hair and beauty salon, which allowed her to earn an underground income after the government shut down the public elementary school where she had worked as a kindergarten teacher.

Meanwhile, Warren had a sensation of being pursued. The anxiety triggered tremors in his body and caused him to envision his death. Still, he strolled from the subway turnstiles and tunnels to his favorite used bookstore on Yonge Street.



Envisioning one's death in an apocalyptic atmosphere did not strike him as an unhealthy sensation, particularly since Toronto suffered riots in the midst of food shortages, police shootings, and civil unrest, and mass casualties in the aftermath of a lethal radioactive cloud, which spewed from the nearby nuclear plant after a terrorist attack. YYZ Books somehow avoided destruction, looting, and vandalism despite weeks of prolonged condominium riots, after the initial sprees of arson and book-burning, which occurred in the aftermath of the early disasters. Miraculously, the used bookstore had managed to stay open through the imposition of new book codes and censorship laws. Warren heard rumors the business was exempt from police visits and raids affecting the few remaining bookstores and magazine stands along Yonge Street because of the police chief's tacit orders. Apparently, she and her partner had frequented this bookstore in their college days.

Warren remembered that his daughter's parents lived in Humber College dormitory many years ago. The police chief's partner lived down the hallway on the women's floor. He also remembered how his daughter's parents were homebodies and virtually lived in their pajamas the whole time he stayed in residence. The close couple even wore pajamas to a few of their publishing classes and had difficulty staying awake because they worked nights in the college library and morning classes started early. One Friday evening, Warren guided the pair via bus and subway from Humber College in the suburbs to YYZ Books. The couple had never visited downtown Toronto before and rarely explored Toronto outside the student dormitory, college campus, and nearby shopping mall. Apparently, one trip to downtown Toronto had been enough for the pair.

A few generations later, much in the city had changed. As



Warren walked southward along Yonge Street, he found himself staring at a handsome young couple. The young man stepped forward and asked him if there was anything wrong. He realized from the young man's uniform that he was a member of the book police. He had not bothered taking off his official uniform after his shift, during which he made the rounds at the bookstores and libraries around the overbuilt downtown, where the burnt shells of condominium towers blocked the sunlight. Warren remembered years ago, when storefronts and shops lined the blocks between College and Bloor Streets, natural light once strayed on Yonge Street, but now the hulks of burnt-out shells of condo towers, their walls of glass shattered, and the pocked, bullet-ridden concrete façades of bombproof apartment high-rises scarred the downtown district. A few public library branches and bookstores still somehow managed to stay open to the public and plied their trade, despite constant harassment from the media, politicians, and environmentalists, who protested grandfather clauses should be lifted. The books, activists argued, were legacies of an era in which trees were butchered to provide pulp, raw material for books and newspapers, most of which had been outlawed. Paper and newsprint, the green activists protested, should be recycled or burned in incinerators that provided electricity for the city's waning power grid to meet shortages and help rationing. The intermittent blackouts, brownouts, and power shortages reminded Warren of the nuclear power station accident, after the terrorists flew a plane into the cooling tower.

The disastrous reactor meltdown and plant explosions led to a massive toxic radioactive cloud that shrouded Toronto. The toxic fog caught virtually the whole population of metropolitan Toronto by surprise because residents were almost too busy, entranced, following live coverage of the event on television

and the live streaming video feeds from social media on their smartphones, tablets, and laptop computers.

The young couple reminded Warren of his daughter's parents. Still single after sixty years of living, he had to admit his passion seemed as strong as ever as he admired the women walking downtown on Yonge Street. He had to acknowledge with a sense of disappointment that they dressed more modestly than the women he remembered seeing on bustling Yonge Street and trendy Queen Street in his Humber College days. He had given up trying to explain why he never succeeded in finding a partner, a woman who could lay claim to his loyalty. He supposed the fact that he was not handsome and assertive enough around women might explain his single status.

The bookstore clerk Warren had known for three decades might have an explanation, but Nelson would probably joke Warren was a bachelor because he found solace in the world of print: collecting books, magazines, comic books, and graphic novels. Warren trusted Nelson sufficiently to find his favorite books and magazines, prohibited material stockpiled in the black-market adult section. Nelson had been working at this bookstore for as long as Warren was a customer, so Warren never expected that the clerk would betray him.

As a librarian at the University of Toronto, Warren observed that their libraries, belonging to an academic and research institution, were exempt from daily visits by the book police. Around the time he retired, though, the book police raided the humanities library once a month. Squads of enforcement officers dramatically pulled up to the front entrances in pickup trucks and armored cars and sent police charging through the stacks and study rooms. He occasionally wondered aloud with his colleagues if this was a military exercise



to reassure a distressed civilian population and to warn dissident students. His fellow librarians argued the big show of force was a spectacle: melodrama, shock and awe. But, he reminded them, the police usually ended up taking a few truckloads of books from the humanities and arts sections to burn in government-sanctioned incinerators, which were also supposedly eco-friendly. The book burnings provided electricity to the power grid, particularly during shortages and peak demand, the hot spells and cold snaps, when people went straggling through the streets, seeking fuel, food, and shelter. Some librarians at the campus joked the police confiscated books because of energy shortages.

During Warren's lifetime, which spanned seven decades, he realized he had been through some amazing changes in society, education, technology, readership, and censorship, even though he lived his entire life within the city of Toronto and hardly ever travelled outside of its metropolitan boundaries. The only time Warren travelled beyond the city boundaries was when the university library sent him for academic library science conferences to the Erindale campus in Mississauga, which some argued was merely a suburb of Toronto or a bedroom community within its forever-expanding boundaries.

The catalysts for revolution and upheaval seemed to have been the terrorist attack on the nuclear plant, the reactor explosions, and the ensuing condominium riots. That was around the time Warren told himself he had enough and abandoned his self-imposed ban, broke the law, and bought a *Playboy* from Nelson at YYZ Books. The vintage magazine featured an adult female model posing nude beside a jukebox in a nightclub. Taking such a chance, assuming a huge risk, breaking the law, he felt guilty. After all, adult magazines and videos became



restricted under the administration of Chelsea Clinton and then were abruptly banned following the election of Ivanka Trump. Both presidents helped influence and shape policy in Canada, particularly after the election of Prime Minister Caroline Mulrooney and then Sophia Trudeau.

Politicians aside, the whole world Warren knew—at least as far as the world within the boundaries of metropolitan city of Toronto—was a place of homelessness, squatting, panhandling, carjackings, vandalism, food shortages, and huge bonfires in parks and public squares. Books seemed the sole relic of civilization that brought him cerebral pleasure and a sense that he lived an existence worth continuing. He was unable to resist his book and magazine collecting habits in an era when such behavior was dangerous. Even his work as a librarian, instead of satiating his desire for books, stimulated his appetite for the printed word.

He looked through the single shelf of paperbacks and magazines. He could not believe it, but Nelson had stashed on the back shelves of YYZ Books a paperback edition of *The Story of O*, whose pages had been singed as if it had been rescued from a bonfire. Nelson had marked the price at only two hundred dollars, probably because of its condition, but the book was definitely too hot to handle. It would probably land him in prison for the remainder of his life if he were caught with it in his possession.

Beside him, there stood a woman, pale, paper-skinned, wearing a form-fitting jean jacket and tight pants. She had a tiny nose and ear piercings. But what he found most remarkable was the fact that she had the most unusual eyes, one brown and one blue. He remembered the censorship-board-approved news he saw on the authorized news billboard on the subway train: the report about a police officer



with an unusual eye condition acquitted of extrajudicial homicide. The sole witness testified that the police officer who fired the fatal shot at the unarmed suspect had blue eyes when the officer in question had heterochromia. This handsome young woman probably had the condition. Even though those around him were telling him he was becoming paranoid, he could not help but suspect that she was an undercover police officer. But he concluded such a woman could never work undercover because she possessed such distinctive physical traits. Seemingly, she lacked anonymity, unless they were mismatched tinted contacts, which seemed a distinct possibility. However, he understood the previous administration had banned tinted contacts because many manufacturers were starting to insert microprocessors and camera lenses that could surreptitiously provide still photography and a live video feed built into the lens.

He found a collectable *Penthouse* magazine, buried at the bottom of the heap of vintage *Life* magazines, which would have passed most community standards at the time it was produced, but which was illegal by contemporary standards because it depicted full frontal nudity. The magazine contained nude photographs of the celebrity Madonna. Warren remembered the magazine's release when he was a teenager; the pictorial created a scandal. People who viewed the picture now might be stunned that the pop star proudly exhibited her body, including her pubic and armpit hair.

Warren paid Nelson the magazine's list price of a thousand dollars. Nelson licked his fingers, pulled out a brown paper bag from beneath the counter, and counted out eight hundred dollars, which he set in the till and pocketed two hundred. Warren was reminded that, as a result of hyperinflation and because these were collectors' items and prohibited, he was



paying a hundred times what he paid for these magazines and books forty years ago. He even remembered he owned these issues as a teenager until his mother seized his collection and tossed the magazines in the garbage. Nelson slipped the magazine in a sturdy plastic sheath to protect its condition, because he knew Warren was a collector. Then he inserted the magazine into a brown paper bag, which he folded over the top and taped. Warren slipped the collector's item into his backpack. They chatted briefly about government-sanctioned e-books, authorized biographies of politicians, and the latest series of live streaming video, produced by the government media agency, based on former Prime Minister Brian Mulrooney's autobiography. As Warren was leaving, Nelson advised him he might have new collectables next week.

Warren started to walk southwards down Yonge Street toward his favorite café, where he usually met Rex. Nelson claimed that Rex had borderline personality disorder. Warren could not refute this claim. Though, as long as you did not expect gestures of actual friendship from Rex, you usually never ran into any trouble. Warren did notice he usually wound up always picking up the tab for Rex's coffee or lending Rex the use of his smartphone and laptop computer. Warren bought Rex a venti dark roast which he gulped before Warren could sit down. Warren couldn't even add sugar and cream to his coffee before Rex said, "Did you hear Fitz was busted?"

"Fitz? Busted?"

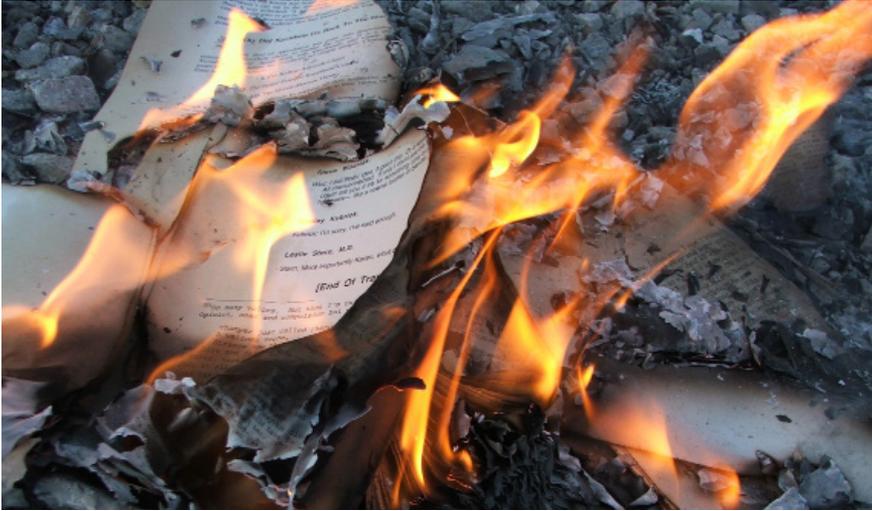
"Fitz was busted. They found a vintage *Playboy* on his computer hard drive."

"He got busted for an old *Playboy*?"

"The magazines were digital copies. He scanned his collection on the photocopier in his university office and saved the



copies in digital book format on the hard drive of his laptop computer. As soon as he got home, he loaded the magazines in his duffle bag, and then he took off to the beach and burned them in a bonfire.”



“How was he caught? Did they have cameras at the university? Did someone spot him?”

“What does it matter how he was caught? I hear the police look the other way if you burn your stuff at the beach; they have too much illicit material to control, so people destroying their own books helps. They probably have cameras in more places than you can think of, but he used his laptop computer in the Café Queen at Wellesley and Church.”

“Just down the street.”

“Well, it’s not just down the street; it’s several blocks from here in a roundabout way. He needed to look at some medical journals on his laptop when a woman looking over his shoulder noticed some icons for *Playboy* magazines on his



monitor. She must have had sharp eyes because all you see is a file name and little thumbnail picture for the magazine cover, but, anyway, she called the cops. The book police set up a sting. The cop sat there noisily slurping a coffee, engaging Fitz in conversation about comic and magazine collecting. Meanwhile, his buddy sat at a nearby table and kept looking over his shoulder at Fitz's laptop screen. He saw the file names—he didn't even see the magazines contents."

"Fitz is a medical doctor, a leading researcher in drug addiction. They set up a sting for a medical scientist for some vintage *Playboy* magazines?"

"I guess you couldn't call it a sting, but a few undercover officers, you know, experienced guys with a little gray in their hair and mustaches, put him under surveillance. The first cop sat beside Fitz in the café and chatted, while the second watched. When Fitz started working on his research online, reading his medical journals, the first asked him, real friendly, if that was digital copy of the bicentennial edition of *Playboy* magazine he thought he saw. Well, you just don't know how stupid Fitz can be toward somebody who he thinks of as a friend. The cop said, 'Yeah, I guess they actually didn't shave their pubic hair back then. He didn't even say, like, pubes, like any normal person would. He said pubic hair, which should have been a warning to Fitz.'"

Warren felt bad for Fitz; as one of the professional's blue-collar buddies, one of his book collecting friends, they planned to meet sometime soon at his house and trade comic books, vintage early issues of *Spiderman* and *Fantastic Four*, and he supposed now the arrest postponed the deal indefinitely.

"Wait a second. Let me finish. And the guy, real friendly, says, 'Well, do you think I can see?' And, Fitz, real naïve, opens



the digital file right in the café for him to see. The cop makes a cellphone call, and soon a whole squad of uniformed cops fly into the café and bust him, like he's a homicidal maniac on a rampage when it's limp-wristed, effeminate Fitz who melts when he sees a homeless person or hears a sob story from a panhandler. Did you ever see Fitz when he sees a violent movie? He turns the TV off and bites his knuckle. He can't stand to see someone in pain: that's why he went into medical research. And *he* got busted."

"I thought Fitz was gay. Isn't that Internet café at Church and Wellesley a favorite in the gay community?"

"You're right on both counts. But what does it matter? Fitz is a collector like you and me. Anyway, if he could find a woman in real life like he can in *Playboy*, I bet he would date her."

"Those are two big ifs. Fitz had second degree burns all over his face, and plastic surgery couldn't correct the scars."

"He doesn't have problems finding any action as a gay man."

"I guess some men don't mind scars."

"Since he was arrested, he lost his teaching position at the university."

"I didn't know he was a professor at the university. I know he does cutting-edge research."

"He's not a professor, but an instructor or assistant professor, or whatever you call the instructors at the medical school. Anyway, he lost that teaching position. He lost his research grants, too. He got fired from the clinic where physicians consult him, and the college of physicians and surgeons has started action against him, you know, legal proceedings."

"For vintage *Playboys* in digital format?"



Rex shrugged. "I don't make the rules."

"You mean the laws. I guess Presidents Chelsea Clinton and Ivanka Trump decided enough porn, hard-core or soft-core, or anything even close, and Prime Ministers Sophia Trudeau and Carol Mulrooney followed course. Instead of *Playboy* and *Penthouse*, it's *Better Homes and Gardens* and *Good Housekeeping*."

"Whatever. Better housekeeping is important. I'm still trying to get my apartment organized. I notice when it's neat and tidy I feel much better and have a better outlook on life."

"A better outlook on life? Well, I guess society's loss is prison's gain. I suppose he'll be a good chemistry and biology teacher to all those convicts hoping to finish their college correspondence courses."

"Like I said, I don't make the rules."

"Yeah, but you seem pretty smug and happy about it," Warren said.

"I've got a university degree," Rex said. "It never did me any good."

"Except land you in jail when you started manufacturing those designer stimulants and hallucinogens. Was it the mind-benders that did you in, eh? They were too potent, too many overdoses?" Judging from the expression on Rex's face, Warren realized he touched a sore spot. He wished he had not mentioned past transgressions in their favorite café, where Rex liked to eat his brownies, laced with hash or cannabis, as he slurped hot strong coffee and laughed at his own off-color jokes. Warren decided to tell him about the woman with the bright blue eye and dark brown eye he saw a short while ago just up the street at YYZ Books. "Heterochromia. I think it's a



genetic condition, but it looks awesome.”

Rex looked pensive and worried at the description of the woman. Then Warren told him about the trial of the riot squad officer for extrajudicial homicide where the verdict hinged on the witness’ description of the cop who fired the shots as having blue eyes. The prosecutor argued that the witness saw the police officer with heterochromia, in profile. Therefore, he observed only her blue eye, but the judge countered that if the witnesses was standing where he testified he stood when he saw the shooting he would have seen the police officer’s brown eye. Besides, the judge decided he had problems with the credibility of the witness, who plainly indicated he nurtured an antipathy to the police.

Rex looked around the café, reached beneath the table, and from a handbag withdrew a magazine in a plastic sheath. “Look what I have: the first issue of *Playboy* magazine to feature a black woman on the cover, and it’s in mint condition.”

“That’s a find for certain. It’s probably worth a wad of cash.”

“But it would be risky to try to sell it.”

Eager to show him his latest find, Warren lifted the magazine wrapped in cellophane from the plastic bag. “Hey, look what I found: the *Penthouse* issue with pictures of Madonna nude.”

Then Warren noticed the very pale woman, with the remarkable eyes, one bright blue, one dark brown. Rex took a bite of his walnut fudge with hashish. His mouth full of sugar and chocolate, he gestured toward the woman as if she wasn’t present and muttered. Warren’s suspicion etched lines across his face, adding years in age to his appearance. The woman had a scowl, a ruthless look that suggested she



could easily kill a man, which reminded Warren of law enforcement types, former friends. Feeling betrayed by Rex, he was not certain if he was just being paranoid, but he excused himself, saying he needed to go to the washroom. This time, he took his backpack and searched for his penknife inside its compartments, but realized he forgot the tool in his apartment with his envelopes and mail.

Warren managed to shred the *Penthouse* magazine, but he could not completely flush the fragments down the toilet. After he washed his hands, he dumped the plastic sheath and paper bag at the bottom of the wastebasket. There went a thousand dollars from his pension or cash from the book deals he occasionally made buying or trading. He skipped out of the washroom, after first checking to make certain that he did not leave any evidence behind. Then the lean muscular woman, with the vivid blue eye and the brown eye, urgently strode into the washroom, and he thought he should escape, make a run for freedom.

However, Rex urged him to stay in the café. He wanted to tell him sappy, sexist jokes about blondes and dead babies. Warren did not appreciate his sense of humor, but he forced himself to listen, justifying the collusion because, he figured, at his age he could not afford to be picky about his friends. Again he wondered why he spent much time with Rex, who could be obnoxious, particularly when he was stoned. Rex said Warren was paranoid, but the news about Fitz rattled him, and he realized he should leave the café. He told Rex he needed to leave early to finish organizing the latest additions to his collection.

Warren stepped out of the café and hurried down Yonge Street. As he strode down the broken sidewalk, he could see the fire and commotion from a book burning at the site



of a condominium tower demolition. When he reached the subway station, whose stairwell was still blackened from a recent blaze, he saw the flashing advertisement for a free day of digital file purges: electronic memory devices like flash cards, hard drives, USB sticks, and DVDs could be brought to disposal and recycle depots without retribution during an amnesty period. The technocrats urged the populace to delete and purge prohibited e-book literature and arts without risk of criminal prosecution.

As Warren waited for the last subway train, he saw the plainclothes book police approaching him with backup officers, who had IDs strung from lanyards around their necks, backups, body armor, and tactical weapons. He realized he was caught in a sting, when he saw the blue-eyed, brown-eyed woman at the forefront, leading the pack, running, the book police dangling identification badge from her neck. Warren thought his life was ruined, but, before he could reach the exit, the subway train sped into the dingy station. Warren saw the officer pull out her laser-guided revolver. As the officer aimed the pistol's sights, Warren realized in that moment the end was near and leapt in front of the roaring subway station, on the last run for the night. On the train tracks, poised for self-destruction, he realized he was afraid to die. Besides, he saw the eyes of the train operator, whose face appeared youthful and pretty. He thought of his daughter and the trauma both young women might experience with his body crushed and mutilated by a rusted, rattling train. He could hurtle himself in front of the train or cling to subway tunnel. He inched along the gangplank alongside tracks, hugging the cement wall, pressing his body against the grime, as the train roared past him, brushing the fabric of his coat. Underneath the overhanging ledge of the platform, he found and unbolted a heavy steel door that led to a trestle and a tunnel beneath



the subway line. He crouched through a dark emergency passageway that led to a concrete stairwell that opened into waning twilight and a serene park. After hiding in the forest through the drizzle along a riverbank, he slept on a park bench.

In the morning, he hiked along the trails bordering the river and winding through the forests. Then he walked along back streets for several kilometres across the sprawling city to his daughter's apartment in Etobicoke. It was not far from the Humber College campus, where he first met Paula's parents in the book and magazine publishing program, which was the closest formal education that Warren could find to comic book writing, his true aspiration. As soon as he knocked on the door, she knew the book police were after him. After she fed him seagull stew and racoon chili, they drank coffee and talked. Then she served homemade carrot liqueur and chatted some more, before she sat him in her clanky hairstylist chair. Paula shaved his beard then trimmed his eyebrows, nose, and ear hair. Then she dyed his hair, lending him a more youthful appearance. He even luxuriated in the sensation of a facial before she decided more drastic measures might be useful and injected him with botox. Warren was virtually unrecognizable after her clippers, scissors, ointments, and creams had conditioned and tamed his wrinkled, aging face and thinning grey hair.

Even though he repeatedly warned her he suspected the police may have put her apartment under surveillance, the following afternoon Paula returned with a change of clothes for him, which she found scavenging through a thrift shop. She dressed him in khakis and camouflage, inauspicious clothes, which would help him blend with the roving bands of homeless and refugees wandering the littered streets, living in parks, heated



and illuminated by bonfires. She even dressed him in body armor, a lightweight vest, which he could not believe was made from bulletproof material.

He managed to take her to a self-serve marijuana dispensary with an automated teller machine in the lobby and gave her some money. Despite the downturn in the economy and hyperinflation, he still received a healthy pension, indexed and linked to the cost of living. While he waited in a terminal full of refugees, the homeless, unemployed, and displaced persons, she bought him a ticket on the transcontinental train to the west coast.

Paula told him that she was sending him to her sister's house in Vancouver. "Do you know what that means?"

Stressed and fatigued, he might have felt stunned, but his newfound fatalism merely allowed him to nod his head. "That I have another daughter?"

"You do have another daughter." He blankly looked into the brown eyes of the face that uncannily resembled his own.

"The best advice I can give you: if you want to avoid the complications of family, never donate semen again."

"Back then I think I understood what I was getting into, and I may have even secretly hoped life and relationships might get complicated sometime in the future. Now it feels like it's a matter of survival and a little late for regrets."

"Agreed. No regrets, but it's never too late. You might be delighted to hear she does run her own bookstore, an underground bookstore. There might be a genetic marker for bookishness, or at least it runs in the family, and I'm certain you'll feel right at home." Paula told her father he should be able to stay with her twin sister indefinitely, or at least until he



was able to find some decent accommodation.

“If you want to know why I didn’t tell you earlier, it’s because finding you was my project, not hers. At the time, when I told her I wanted to find out who my father was, she accepted what our parents said and was not interested. Nikita can be a cold-hearted person, but I think knowing the identity of her true biological father was simply more than she could handle then; I know it was hard for me when I first found out. She is looking forward to meeting you, though. You’re a hero to her—a librarian and fugitive from the book police.” Paula fastened the straps on his bulletproof vest. “You’re going to be all right?”

“Don’t worry about me.”

“But you never expected it to get so complicated?”

“True.”

Paula saw him off on the transcontinental train, destination Vancouver, in the morning, along with a group of homeless Toronto residents and refugees from many exotic, faraway destinations. Warren realized he had become that thing he would have never expected in his own lifetime: a survivor, in the middle of retirement in what, even without advancing age, was the bleakest time of his life. As they embraced and Warren waved good-bye, he thought he was off to an inauspicious but fresh start. He felt as if he was on a new path, and, he reminded himself, he was the father to two twin daughters.
