

51 FLAVORS OF DNA

RAVENSGATE: THE FOUNDRY, ISSUE #35

THURSDAY, 19 JULY 2002, PROCESSING WING,
SHERIDAN FEDERAL REGIONAL STRONGHOLD ("THE INN"),
SHERIDAN, YAMHILL COUNTY, OREGON

Tabula Rasa looks nervously about the sterile white briefing room. He sees nothing but white—white plastic chairs, white plastic table, white tile floor, white door, white plastic door latch and handle, even white plastic switch-plates on the walls. Seams in the table indicate a hidden console somewhere, and seams in the wall just to the left of the door indicate a hidden screen.

The door opens, and a massive red-headed NCO fills the doorway. The boyish, freckled face appears incongruous atop a triangular two-meter-tall build appearing capable of folding up Tabula Rasa and putting him in his back pocket. No unit insignia, no last name on the camo fatigues, just a Specialist-4 patch on the left arm indicating rank in the United States Army.

"For security reasons, we don't show our faces to prisoners, and we don't give out names," the man says as he nearly crushes Tabula Rasa's hand in greeting. "You can just call me 'Sparky.'"

"Nice to meet you, Sparky."

"You had some questions about one of the Jane Does?" TR and Sparky sit down at opposite sides of the table, the briefing room door closes.

"She's a loose end from an old case of ours," TR responds. "We don't know anything about her, least of all whose side she's on. She's been in custody long enough that you guys might know her more than her own mother."

Sparky smiles. "If only that were true. We've piped radio broadcasts into her cell while she's in various states of sleep, and we're able to determine from that her linguistic fluencies. She shows subconscious responses to at least six languages: Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, two dialects of Spanish—Angeleno and US Gulf Coast—and at least five dialects of French. Passive-observation IQ tests place her between 190 and 230 on the Wechsler scale. We keep a psi-block collar on her at all times because she may exhibit strong precog capabilities, and CAT and PET scans of her indicate elevated psi potential."

"Precog?"

"She shows an interest in current events," says Sparky. "She'll sit up and use the touch-screen on her TV, change the channel to CNN just before a major breaking story."

"Hmm. But still no name or hometown?"

"Nope. We'd pull her out of isolation if she'd give us a true name or even a hometown. Her English contains hints of US Gulf Coast, Pacific Northwest and Midwestern inflections, so either she's traveled around a lot or has a talent for picking up accents."



“Five dialects of French?”

“Yup. Alsatian, Cajun, Creole, Quebecois and Parisienne. Most terrorists are polyglots, need to move around and interact in foreign lands, yet she doesn't *seem* the type. Then again, she's a cool enough customer to fit the profile.”

“Any clue as to national origin or ethnicity?”

“We're guessing she's American by her speech patterns and ethnicity. Gene-mapping tells us her ancestors came here from Spain, England, Normandy and the Gold Coast of Africa via Haiti, Jamaica, Bermuda and the Chiapas and Sonoran regions of Mexico. She's African-, Native- and Hispanic-American.”

“Did she have any ID on her when you processed her?”

Sparky laughs: “With the catsuit she was wearing, it would have to have shown up on the x-ray; it would have stuck out like a sore thumb otherwise! COMETPRO tracked down her ID by examining abandoned property records, and they forwarded us what they found.”

Sparky opens the tabletop, places his thumb on a pad, and begins typing on a keyboard. The following appears on the screen to the left of the briefing room door, with a processing officer's commentary inline:

- One acrylic unitard, black.
- One acrylic choker necklace, black, with ornately-carved ivory pendant (cross with Haitian-style cross-hatchings masking scattered Hebraic letters).
- Two layers of full-body lingerie, understandable since she was popped in February.
- Comb, plastic, purchase date unknown.
- Lipstick, black, purchased in Portland 11-01-01 with debit card found in abandoned Union Station locker.
- Wallet, black leather, designed for inside coat pocket, found in abandoned Ravensgate Union Station locker 6-25-02. It contained below items.
- Fake Louisiana DL, name of Charlotte Lacroix, fake address (i.e., vacant lot) in New Orleans, alleged DOB 10-31-81.
- Fake Social Security Card in that name.
- Fake debit card in that name, recently issued (i.e., around the new year).
- Debit receipt for Odwalla juice and "organic lunch pack" from Farmers' Food Co-op, Sauvie Island, OR, 02-08-02 at 11:15.
- Debit receipt for storage locker at Ravensgate Union Station, three-month term, which explains why these items did not surface until late June (non-payment of rent, legal seizure of abandoned property, etc.).

“COMETPRO found her PO box,” says Sparky. “It's in Portland on Northwest Saint Helens Road, near Sauvie Island. She applied for it using a fake address, so the FBI is checking for all unlawful-detainer evictions within a 20-mile radius of the Mailboxes Etcetera store.”

“You mentioned an x-ray?” ventures Tabula Rasa.

“Yeah. Docs estimate she’s about 20 years old, based on skeletal details. She’s suffered broken ribs, one possibly from a gunshot wound, no other old injuries, still has appendix and tonsils, and she has all her adult teeth intact. She’s in very good shape.”

“What about the tattoos?” Tabula Rasa asks, pointing to the image onscreen of Jane Doe in an elevator car as it descends into the sub-basements of The Inn.

“She has a total of seven: fleur-de-lis on left breast, vine cross at small of the back, dancing chickens around right ankle, rainbow serpent around right bicep, rainbow-hued sunburst around navel, serpentine vines around left ankle, and a drumming circle around her left bicep. Indicates to me she’s American.”

“You’re able to rattle off all of this quite well—.”

“For an NCO?” interrupts Sparky, laughing. “I’m getting my psych degree this winter, then I’ll be an officer. Can’t tell you where I’ll be next, but I’ll be a grad student. Next question.”

“I see she’s wearing street clothes.”

“Yeah, we’re rewarding her for some good behavior, letting her wear some street clothes and her jewelry. She’s the only person on Sub-Basement Fifteen, so we’ve relaxed a few rules to get her to open up. No luck so far.”

“Still uncooperative, huh?”

“Yeah, in a passive-aggressive sort of way. She’s very well-mannered, follows all our rules. She’s just a brick wall when it comes to finding out her real name.”

“Any chance of interviewing her?”

“Not today, but we can have Area 51 clear an interview within 48 hours.”

“What about getting a copy of her gene-mapping?” TR asks, to which Sparky replies, “I’ll request that 51 e-mail that to your organization. Is a 24-hour window okay?”

Sensing the interview over, Tabula Rasa rises to leave: “Thank you, Sparky.”

“I’ll walk you to your team’s airship.”

**MONDAY, 23 JULY 2002,
THE GROTTO BENEATH DEVEREAUX MANOR,
RAVENSGATE, NEHALEM COUNTY, OREGON**

Tabula Rasa enters the Infirmary via the Briefing Room, takes off his hat, and places it on the coat rack just to his left. Frisson looks up from the Deepthinker terminal and motions him over. The look on her face, equal parts fascination and disbelief, intrigues him.

“You didn’t have to show up in person, Vic,” Dani says. “I could easily post the findings to the FTP site.”

"I'm a bit anxious to find out who she is," Vic replies, "but I have a feeling you're no closer to an answer than when COMETPRO forwarded her genetic profile."

"She's Ravensgate through and through," Dani says, staring intently at the terminal's flat plasma screen. "Any answers we get from her—or her genetic profile—will only yield more questions. I'm running a diagnostic on Deepthinker *and* the gene-mapping subroutine. Again."

"What did you find out?" Vic asks. "The folks at Sheridan tell me she doesn't want to talk to anyone."

"She may be from the future," Dani replies, "which explains why she's not talkative. No risk of contaminating the timeline. And why the boys at The Inn think she's a precog."

Vic, rubbing his temples and exhaling sharply, follows up with, "I'm not her father, am I?"

"Would it bother you if you were?" Dani retorts, pointedly, before adding, "She squeezed a very intriguing genetic history into that catsuit of hers. *If* I'm correct, and *if* Deepthinker is functioning properly. The diagnostic should be done in about five seconds."

"How many diagnostics have you run?"

"Fifteen."

"*Fifteen?*" stammers Vic as the terminal beeps.

"Fifteen. I'm still in disbelief, but I'm maintaining my scientific detachment."

"So, who's her daddy?"

"If this gene map is to be trusted," Dani says, "we owe Oscar a box of cigars."

"What?"

"Read this for yourself," Dani says, rotating the terminal around to face Vic. "The top genetic matches are Oscar Washington and Margaret Palomar, followed by Poppy Lem, Joshua and myself. Her genetic structure matches Oscar and/or Margaret more than the Throckmorton line by a three-to-one margin in each case."

"You're related to Oscar?"

"Somehow, through Poppy Lem, yes."

"How long have you known?"

"Since just before I ran the first diagnostic. I always considered him an older brother, so it's a more comforting discovery than one might think."

"Then why the fifteen diagnostics?"

"Jane Doe's connection to Poppy Lem via Oscar. It begs more questions, especially about Poppy Lem, and it indicates that more than just Max, Morii and Kergillian travel through time. The ironic part is, Max is stuck while everyone else considers him the Father of Modern Time Travel."