

## SIDES — Set B

JULIAN. A nineteenth-century pseudoscience. They believed a person's traits and abilities could be deduced from the contour of the skull.

CLAIRE. Ridiculous, of course. But they were on the right track — localization of brain function.

JULIAN. *(Smiles.)* Another antique.

CLAIRE. A reminder, really. Not to presume we understand more than we do.

JULIAN. *(Puts the head back and picks up one of the framed photographs.)* Is this your family?

CLAIRE. That's my favorite picture. It was taken on a camping trip in Yosemite. We'd been hiking all day, we were worn out but exhilarated too.

JULIAN. Your husband looks like a fine man. And your daughter is lovely.

CLAIRE. Becky had turned fifteen the week before. *(Pause.)* Children that age are ... incandescent, there's no other word. It's almost painful to look at them.

JULIAN. I hope, Claire, that someday ... everything will be all right between you and her.

CLAIRE. Thank you.

JULIAN. You're welcome. *(Gently places the photograph back on the shelf.)*

*(Claire regards Julian for a moment, then speaks quietly.)*

CLAIRE. There are a couple of other photographs I have to show you, Julian.

JULIAN. Of your family?

CLAIRE. No. Someone else.

*(Claire picks up the electronic tablet, displays a photo, and holds it out to Julian. Julian studies it.)*

JULIAN. He looks ill.

CLAIRE. He is, yes. Terminally ill. Pancreatic cancer, late stage. He's seventy-six.

JULIAN. Poor fellow. Who is he?

CLAIRE. His name is Julian Barber.

*(Pause.)*

The next one is him as a younger man.

*(Julian displays the next photo.)*

*(He studies it for a few moments, then looks up at Claire.)*

Mr. Barber contracted with the company two years ago, when he was informed of his diagnosis. Since then the life history department has been constructing a repository of his unique consciousness. They've interviewed him for hundreds of hours to harvest his memories and chart his mental terrain — what he believes, how he thinks. His speech has been subjected to latent semantic analysis and translated into algorithms. Tens of thousands of photographs and documents have been digitized — emails, business papers, contracts, deeds ... *(Shrugs.)* ... anything that's part of him, really, that contributes to who he *is*. Novels he's read. Favorite movies. Music he loves. The names of his childhood friends, his teachers, his pets. Birthday cards. All this information has been stored in an identity file.

*(Pause.)*

Meanwhile, the engineering department scanned and mapped every centimeter of his body. They applied a reversion program to the template to construct a new body, identical in every respect to his appearance there — *(Gestures at the tablet in Julian's hand.)* Facial structure, skin color, height, weight.

JULIAN. Black hair. Brown eyes. In his mid-thirties.

CLAIRE. Thirty-four, to be precise.

### Begin —

Surrounding your internal mechanisms is a biological matrix seeded with Mr. Barber's DNA.

JULIAN. Why?

CLAIRE. To overcome his innate psychological barriers. If you carry his DNA, it will help him accept that when his identity file is downloaded into you —

JULIAN. I'll be him.

CLAIRE. But younger, in perfect health. And according to Terry, you'll have a lifespan of at least two hundred years. With future advances in nanotechnology and neurocomputing, discoveries we can't even *imagine* yet ... *(Shrugs.)* Some researchers, people I respect, talk about immortality.

*(Pause.)*

It's the eternal human dream — liberating our consciousness from its expiration date.

JULIAN. *(Looks at the photograph again.)* What kind of person is he?

CLAIRE. He's the founder and chairman of a transglobal corporation with holdings in communications, molecular manufacturing, media ... He has homes in New York, Beijing, London, France, and Switzerland. He was married for thirty-six years, but his wife Lanfen died several years ago. He has one —

JULIAN. I think I'm asking something else.

CLAIRE. Yes?

JULIAN. Do you like him, Claire?

CLAIRE. We've never met. The company's protocol doesn't allow it. Before or after — to prevent psychological cross-contamination. But you're going to spend several hours with him tomorrow morning. He wants to see you. Speak to you.

JULIAN. When will the download be done?

CLAIRE. Ordinarily we'd allow you a few weeks to gain complete mastery of your body. But Mr. Barber's condition deteriorated unexpectedly last night. The doctors managed to stabilize him —

JULIAN. It doesn't matter, though, does it? If the identity file is complete ... the download can be done after he dies.

CLAIRE. He insists on witnessing the creation of his new self.

JULIAN. (*Quietly.*) "Me."

CLAIRE. It's scheduled for tomorrow evening. You know how Terry is, though — she wants to run a battery of tests on you first. Someone will be here in a few hours to escort you.

(*Pause.*)

Do you understand, Julian?

JULIAN. Yes, it's perfectly clear. I am a substrate. A container.

CLAIRE. No, you're much more than that, believe —

JULIAN. I am ...

(*Pause.*)

... the cup into which you will pour Julian Barber.

CLAIRE. (*Stricken.*) Don't say that, please.

JULIAN. (*Gently.*) It's all right, Claire.

CLAIRE. I'm sorry to spring this on you.

JULIAN. Why didn't you tell me earlier?

CLAIRE. I expected to have more time ...

JULIAN. Time for what?

CLAIRE. I — To prepare you.

(*A moment, then Claire shakes her head.*)

And to prepare myself. This is the moment I dread, always. What could be more fascinating than watching you change from day to day?

**End —**

JULIAN. There are others, then.

CLAIRE. You're my fourth.

JULIAN. What were they —

CLAIRE. I'm sorry, I'm not free to discuss them. (*Pause.*) A few other companies are doing this kind of work too, but the confidentiality barriers are very strict. As far as we can determine, the current worldwide total is fifteen.

(*Pause.*)

The engineers and programmers will be working with you for a few days. Then you'll be meeting with Mr. Barber's — your — lawyers, financial advisors, and executive officers. To be fully reintegrated into the thousands of details of your life. That process will take several weeks.

JULIAN. (*Smiles.*) The next time you see me, I'll be a new man.

CLAIRE. I won't see you again, Julian. As I said, the protocol ...

JULIAN. Of course. I'll be him. (*Places the tablet on the table.*) This is our last day, then.

(*Pause.*)

CLAIRE. There's one more thing. I was about to tell you, earlier ... Julian Barber has a child.

JULIAN. A child?

CLAIRE. An adult son — he's forty-four. His name is Paul.

(*A moment, then Julian moves to the window. He stands looking out, framed in the brilliant sunlight.*)

JULIAN. If it's all right, I'd like to walk over to engineering now.

CLAIRE. Are you sure?

JULIAN. (*Gestures at the window.*) It's a beautiful day. I want to feel the sunlight on my skin.

CLAIRE. All right, I'll take you over.

JULIAN. There's really no need. I know the way.

(*Pause.*)

CLAIRE. I'll call, then, and let them know you're coming.

(*Julian turns away from the window and comes over to Claire.*)

JULIAN. After the download is done ... will I remember my time here? With you?