

Unholy Alliance

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St. Louis, Missouri, In the Year 2012

The foreign investor who had both the most to gain and the most to lose asked the obvious question. “How is it that no one will notice when tens of thousands of people become sick or die from this additive?”

All eyes turned once again to a young researcher, Jared Hamner. He was not very tall and his sandy hair would occasionally fall across his eyes as he made his presentation to the fourteen people gathered at the large boardroom-sized table. This was a distraction to one attorney present who wanted nothing more than to reach into her briefcase for her scissors and snip the offending strands.

Jared brushed his hair out of his eyes before putting his hands in his lab coat pockets. He stared across the room at nothing and spoke in a very clinical tone. It was as if he were reciting the elements of the periodic table and not an estimated death toll. This was how he coped with what his job had become. “We actually could be talking about millions of people. They could develop an immune system failure called Th2 dominance. In most healthy people, this immune system failure will take place over the course of months and even years.”

“What are the symptoms?” The question came from an impatient investor whose accent Jared couldn’t place.

“Symptoms of Th2 dominance can range from minor allergies to the development of various cancers, and any of over 80 known autoimmune diseases like MS and lupus.”

“T -what ever you just called it - can do all that – cause all of those diseases without anyone realizing it?” asked an older man whose mind was spinning with all of the medical terms he had heard over the past 45 minutes.

This time, Jared looked into the eyes of the one man he believed might still have some semblance of a conscience. “And there’s more. Th2 dominance makes it very difficult to fight viral infections. Should the US ever encounter a super bug in the future, those with Th2 dominance would not be able to fight off the disease. A widespread pandemic could result.”

“You mean that we would have something of plague proportions on our hands?” This question came from the only female investor invited.

“Exactly,” Jared replied as he glanced up at the fluorescent light above him, which had started to flicker.

The man leading the meeting walked over to the window and scanned the St. Louis skyline. “Gentlemen,” he turned to face everyone again, “this won’t be an issue in the future. What our doomsday-prophesying young scientist has not mentioned is the role genetics play in Th2 dominance.” The man leading the meeting looked at Jared who wished more than anything to be somewhere else and motioned him to explain.

Feeling defeated, Jared continued, “It is likely that only those with a genetic tendency or those exposed to mercury will be affected.”

“Everyone who has ever been immunized or had a cavity filled has been exposed to mercury,” came a comment from an investor who had until that moment in the proceedings remained silent.

“Exactly, and we can hide under the same cloak that has been protecting the makers of vaccinations and amalgam fillings for years,” matter-of-factly chimed an attorney who had joined in late, but not missed a step. He placed his black leather briefcase on the table and pulled out a file folder before seating himself. The group who did not at all seem phased by his tardiness must have expected his late arrival. A few nodded at him, then the meeting continued as planned.

Still unconvinced, the biggest of the potential investors asked, “What about genetic tendencies? How is that being addressed in our favor?”

“I am confident that Ulaldi Foods would receive the same protection given to food manufacturers that use alloxan,” came the answer from the highest paid attorney in the group.

“Alloxan?” asked a balding man who had been furiously taking notes during the entire proceedings. He had folders and papers sprawled not only in front of himself, but also the people seated on either side of him too.

By the bewildered looks on their faces, it was easy to assume that few outside the attorneys had ever heard of alloxan before that day.

Another of the four attorneys at the table spoke up. The woman had flaming red hair piled high on her head. Her confident manner set the prospective investors at ease. “Alloxan is the chemical used to bleach flour. It causes the body to attack cells in the pancreas, resulting in the development of diabetes. Because this will only occur in those genetically susceptible to the disease, no action has ever been taken by the FDA. This is despite overwhelming evidence, implicating alloxan in the development of diabetes mellitus. Whenever people are genetically predisposed to disease, there is no liability on product manufacturers.”

A smile came to the face of the dark-eyed man leading the meeting. “The point is that I have assurance from the FDA that in the *unlikely* scenario that a link develops between our product and Th2 dominance, our interests will be protected. We have nothing to worry about.” With his last statement, the meeting was adjourned.

Jared was the first person out of the boardroom. Once inside his car, he headed toward the lab. He had more to do than he possibly could finish before five, so he decided he had better call his wife and warn her that he would be late.

Once back at the lab, Jared started on the “mound” of electronic paper work that had been accruing on his desktop. The time it took to prepare his presentation for the investors had left him extremely behind. He had barely signed off his first report in a pile of over fifty when he was interrupted by the sound of his best friend and co-worker’s voice.

“How did it go today?” Mike asked placing his prized pen in his pocket protector. The pocket protector was a gag gift he received at the company holiday party last year.

“I’m not sure anything could have prepared me for the way those investors overlooked the consequences of Th2 dominance.” Jared shook his head in disgust. “I just don’t get it! I told them what would happen if the latest and greatest super bug were to hit. No one even seemed phased.” Jared pounded his fist on his desk and an ink pen went flying. “I wanted so much to wheel my wife in there and let them see the destructive power of Th2 dominance first hand.” Jared’s heart was pounding. “I can’t stand being a part of this. If I didn’t need the insurance for my wife, I would have just walked away from this job months ago.”

“Maybe this will make you feel better,” Mike said, handing Jared a file folder.

Jared opened the folder, “What’s this?”

“My new project,” Mike stated as he watched Jared scan the document.

“Who are you doing this research for?” Jared asked, unsure of why Mike was bringing it to his attention.

“I don’t know,” Mike said flatly.

“You have no idea whatsoever who contracted the lab?” Jared thought it was strange that Mike would be testing for an anonymous company.

“No, but I’m guessing that it may be one of the two pharmaceutical companies whose in-house lab reports I was given. If my guess is correct, Ulaldi is collaborating with a pharmaceutical company. I think they’re trying to find an antidote to the immune problems they are going to be creating.”

Jared flipped through the folder. “From the looks of this, it’s still in Phase I testing, which puts it years and maybe even decades away from becoming an approved treatment.”

Mike lowered his voice to a whisper, “Jared, from what I can tell, the entire lab is testing products designed to lessen the symptoms of Th2 dominance. Get this, Sandy was just given a thermal fabric made of some new fiber to start testing.”

“Fabric?” Jared asked with a puzzled look on his face.

Mike replied, “I’m guessing it’s for the millions of future cold-sensitive people - those who are going to have Raynaud’s Phenomenon due to Th2 dominance. I’m pretty sure the thermal fabric is to keep them from losing their fingers and toes.” Mike fiddled with the pens in his pocket protector as he talked. “Once they lose circulation to their extremities, amputation can become necessary.”

“Of course, I wasn’t thinking. I guess the only autoimmune symptoms on my mind are the ones my wife has. We’re not dealing with Raynaud’s – at least not yet.” Jared added with disgust, “That’s capitalism at it’s finest. Ulaldi secretly profits from making the world sick, then they make money curing the disease they caused.”

Mike rested his hand on Jared’s shoulder, “Well, maybe something good will come of all this. Maybe we’ll soon be testing a cure for your wife.”

“And what about the millions of people Ulaldi is making sick who won’t be able to afford the cure?” Jared wasn’t comforted by Mike’s rationalizations. He had serious concerns about this food additive. He couldn’t bear the thought that millions of uninsured people would needlessly suffer like his wife. “*Someone needs to stop Ulaldi before its too late,*” Jared thought to himself.

Terre Haute, Indiana, 21 Years Later...

Carolee looked out her kitchen window to see the first snowflakes floating gently down from the sky. “Looks like the weather man was right. I’m not especially excited about you going down to Bloomington in the snow,” she said to her best friend, Noah.

“I promise I’ll be careful,” Noah stood at attention making the Scout’s Honor Sign. “There’s nothing to worry about. I’ll have my R.P.P.G’s on the entire time.”

“Your what?” Carolee looked at him as if he were speaking Greek.

“My Raynaud’s Phenomenon Protection Gear,” Noah replied in a very official sounding voice.

Carolee laughed, “Can’t you just call them gloves? R.P.P.G.’s sounds like a race car part.” She added in a playful voice, “You’d *better* be careful mister. If you lose your fingers, who will help me fix up my house? Then she paused, looked Noah in the eyes, and quietly added, “Seriously Noah, I can’t take another person I care about going through an amputation because of Raynaud’s.”

“You’re starting to sound just like my mother Carolee. I’ll be fine, I promise.” Noah said reassuringly.

Noah watched as Carolee turned and walked over to her pantry. She was gathering ingredients for food that he would be taking to a tailgate party outside the Indiana University football stadium. As he watched her, Noah’s thought she was *almost* perfect.

Noah returned to the potatoes that he was supposed to be peeling. He didn’t want to admit it to Carolee, but his hands were aching. “Since you’re going to the trouble of making all of this for us Carolee, why don’t you come too?” Noah found himself saying.

“Because I hate football and your girlfriend hates me.” Carolee said matter-of-factly.

“She doesn’t hate you,” Noah scolded. “Sammy doesn’t hate anyone.”

Carolee pulled out the red and white Indiana University oven mitts from her drawer and chuckled. They had been a house-warming gift from Noah and every time she saw them she couldn’t help but laugh. “OK, you’re right. Let me rephrase. I hate football and your girlfriend hates *sharing* you with me. Better?”

“Much better, thank you.” Noah looked at the oven mitts. “Glad to see that you are putting those to good use.” He made room on the stovetop for whatever it was that Carolee was about to pull out of the oven. “You know Miss Chef, if you don’t come, that girlfriend of mine is bound to let everyone assume that *she* cooked all of this wonderful food,” Noah tempted.

“Oh, I don’t care,” Carolee shrugged. She reached into the bowl and retrieved a potato Noah had peeled. She then placed it on her cutting board to be cubed.

Noah had an exaggerated look of skepticism on his face and stared at Carolee without saying a word.

Carolee smiled and wiped her wet hands on her apron, “Well, not *too* much anyway.” She laughed and devilishly added, “I know! Getting credit for all the slaving *I* did in the kitchen this morning can be her reward for allowing us to see one another on a Saturday.”

Noah plopped another potato into the bowl of cold water. “Ha ha ha, very funny.”

Distance seemed to solve everything. Noah was dating a nice girl – a terrible cook, but a nice girl -from Bloomington. She was 45 minutes away and taking more than a full load of classes that semester. Their time together was limited to the weekends due to her school workload. That left the weekdays to Carolee.

“Well, make her day and tell her that she can have you on Wednesday this next week.” Carolee stated with a grin.

“Do you have to work late this Wednesday?” Noah queried. He was surprised since Carolee was spending as many evenings as she could doing home improvement projects.

“No, I,” she stopped and popped a piece of celery in her mouth, “have a date.”

“A date with whom and why are you going out in the middle of the week?” Noah’s eyebrows raised. Carolee hadn’t had a date in a good four months or so, which in Noah’s book made her close to spinster-hood.

“A date with a guy I met up in Chicago last month – remember, I told you about him.”

Noah looked confused.

“You know, the guy I met when I went to church while I was visiting Jennifer. It has to be Wednesday because he is coming to town that day.”

“Oh, the *tall* cute one.” Noah grabbed Carolee by her apron strings and gave them a tug, pulling her toward him. She swung around and they were suddenly eye to eye. “Wednesday is our day and I refuse to loan you out to anyone else during the week. Period.” It was horseplay. Noah couldn’t really tell Carolee what to do. However, a pang of jealousy he didn’t want to acknowledge was creeping to the surface.

“Sorry buddy, but cold Noodle O’s it is for you on Wednesday - Or you can always eat at home instead and your mom will warm them up in the microwave for you.” Carolee backed away and walked over to a drawer to dig out the aluminum foil.

“Hey now, no poking fun at my mom’s cooking.” Noah defended.

Carolee asked, “Speaking of your mom, do you know yet what you are going to get her for her birthday? I don’t want to be helping you look for something the day before on our lunch hour like last year.”

“Actually, I thought of a wonderful gift to give her.” Noah was quite proud of himself for not procrastinating this year.

“Oh really, what?” Carolee was impressed. She couldn’t remember a year when Noah had thought of his mom’s birthday more than twenty-four hours in advance.

“I am giving her a pair of diamond earrings.” Noah spoke the words as though he was in the habit of always giving expensive gifts.

“Where did you get diamond earrings? My parents must be paying you more than they are paying me,” Carolee teased. As an architect, she actually made more than Noah did doing finish carpentry work for the Fairbanks family business. However, Carolee spent that money as fast as she made it. For that reason, the more conservative Noah always had more money than she did.

“In the box of stuff that belonged to my birth parents is a pair of diamond earrings. They once belonged to my biological mother. They’re small diamonds, but they’re pretty.”

“I’m sure that your mom will like them,” Carolee smiled. *What woman wouldn’t?*

Noah was grinning from ear to ear. “I know she will. She has commented in the past about how nice they are.”

Noah didn’t want to let the topic of Carolee’s date die. “So, back to the original subject- Call Mr. Chicago and tell him that you are on a mission of mercy to save a dear friend from the certain fate of eating canned food on Wednesday night and that you will just have to cancel,” Noah winked.

Carolee wasn’t so sure how to handle what she was seeing in her best friend’s eyes at that moment. He was only half kidding and she knew it. With her eyebrows raised, Carolee looked at Noah and took a deep breath. “I need you to be serious for a minute.” She paused then took another deep breath. “Someday, you are going to be married and it will *not* be OK with your pretty young wife that you are with her on the weekends and I get you on the weekdays. You *do* realize that, don’t you?”

“Well then, I guess I will have to get as much of your home cooking as possible while I still can.” He picked up his knife again. “What do you need me to chop now?”

Noah went to his game and managed to make it there and back with all of his fingers and toes. His behavior seemed more ordinary until Wednesday when he showed up to work on Carolee's den even though he knew she would not be home. Noah was still painting when Carolee came home from her date with Mr. Chicago on Wednesday night. He had camel-colored paint smudged on his right cheek and he seemed totally engrossed in his work, behaving as if he was unaware of her entering the room.

She looked at him trying to decide if he *really* thought his presence at that late hour was even a little inconspicuous. It was bad enough he had shown up to paint today in the first place. Since the day she had bought that run-down house and he had begun helping her to fix it up, he had *never* worked through the ten o'clock news and sports cast. Everything was cleaned up and put away by 10:20 – just in time for the nightly Channel 5 Sports Center Report. Here it was almost midnight and Noah was still painting as if there were no tomorrow.

“What are you doing?” she finally asked Noah after standing in the doorway and staring at him for awhile.

“I am doing what I do every Wednesday night. Fixing up this house so that *you* will have a nice place to live and *I* will have a nice place to visit and eat.” He batted his eyelashes and innocently asked, “How was your date?”

“Never mind about my date. You never work this late at my house on any day of the week Noah Miller and you know it. I can't believe you actually missed Sports Center for the sake of having an excuse to be here painting when I got home.” She shook her head, half-disgusted, but half-amused. Sighing, Carolee said, “Let me change and I will help you clean all this up.” She looked at her watch again. “It will technically be Thursday before we have those brushes washed out.”

Carolee changed into a pair of sweats that already had dabbles of paint on them. She returned to the den to find Noah gathering drop cloths scattered about the room. Carolee noticed that the “drop cloth” Noah was folding was actually one of her good bath towels. She wondered how it had found its way under a wall that Noah was painting, but decided not to ask him why since no answer would satisfy her.

Carolee wanted to get the cleaning over with so that she could go to bed. “Let's go rinse out the brushes before they get hard.”

Noah held up a brush that had obviously seen better days and said, “I think some of them are already past saving.”

Carolee shook her head. Noah didn't see her because he was already headed to the other side of the room for a smaller brush he had been using to paint around the trim. It was then that she noticed his backside was covered with sawdust and splinters. “What's all over you?”

Noah brushed across his jeans and realized how big of a mess his clothes were. “I was up in the attic this afternoon getting down the box with the earrings in it. I can’t believe how splintered these jeans are. I hope there aren’t splinters all over the seat of your office chair.”

“My chair?” *First my good towel, now my chair -What was that man doing in my house this evening?* He answered her question before she could ask it.

“Carolee, I didn’t just come to paint. I mostly came to use your computer. Spying on you was just a small part of the equation,” he added with a smile.

“Why didn’t you just say so when you got here?”

“Because you were in a hurry to get ready for your date and what I have to say is going to take some time. You see, when I was fishing for the earrings, I found file folders with my birth mom’s medical records.”

“You never noticed them before?” Carolee said in amazement.

“I knew they were there,” Noah said. “It’s just that they were never of interest to me before now.”

Carolee couldn’t imagine being adopted and not wanting to get your hands on everything that you could about your birth parents.

Noah went on to explain, “It turns out my birth mom had a problem with autoimmunity too. The strange thing is that interspersed with my mom’s medical records were research papers for Ulaldi Foods.”

“Ulaldi Foods?” Carolee agreed that was odd.

“Apparently, my biological dad worked for a lab that did product testing for them.” Noah moved a strand of her hair that had fallen in his tired friend’s face. “Before he was killed, my dad was testing the preservative Solenza, which is made by Ulaldi Foods - But that’s not the point. Have you ever heard of Th2 dominance?”

Carolee shook her head indicating that she hadn’t.

“Me neither. That’s why I needed to use your computer. Anyway, I found out that Th2 dominance is a medical condition that has something to do with the immune system being out of whack. I guess over that last 20 years, a record number of Americans are becoming Th2 dominant and scientists aren’t exactly sure why.”

“Well, what happens when you are Th2 dominant?”

“Allergies, cancer, autoimmune disease and its symptoms - *like Raynaud’s*” Noah added so that Carolee would understand the significance of what he was saying.

“So, that means that you are Th2 dominant?” Carolee was beginning to get what he was meaning.

“I think that I would have to be,” then Noah added, “and so was my biological mother. She was diagnosed with over a dozen autoimmune diseases that I have counted so far.”

Wondering if she was missing something, Carolee asked, “So what does Solenza have to do with Th2 dominance?”

“My dad’s testing showed that Solenza *causes* Th2 dominance.” Noah was revealing the secret of the century, but spoke the words calmly.

“Noah, Solenza is in *everything!*” Carolee cried. “I love the stuff. I don’t know how people managed before it - they had to keep everything in a refrigerator to prevent it from spoiling.”

Noah handed Carolee the paintbrushes he had just finished cleaning. “Well, if I were you, I would buy a refrigerator and live like women of old who kept their food cold to keep it fresh. - Unless you think that R.P.P.G’s make some kind of desirable fashion statement.”

Carolee walked away with the wet brushes and mumbled under her breath, “Next thing I know, you’ll be telling me I have to give up indoor plumbing too.”

Noah heard her and called out, “Well, you’re an architect. I’m sure you could design a *fine* outhouse.”

After cleaning up the paint mess, Noah and Carolee sat together looking through the loose papers. Carolee helped divide the papers into two stacks. One pile was for his birth mother’s medical records and the other was for anything that had to do with Ulaldi Foods.

“I don’t know if I can stay awake any longer Noah,” Carolee yawned.

Noah stood up and stretched. “Let’s just leave the papers here and we can pick up where we left off tomorrow.”

Noah had no pressing matters at work, so he took Thursday off. He spent the day on Carolee’s computer and phone.

After a particularly long day at work, Carolee returned home and went up to her office where she knew she would find Noah.

“Carolee, I dug up some pretty disturbing things while you were gone,” Noah said before Carolee had the chance to ask him how his search was going.

Carolee wasn't sure that she could handle anything anymore disturbing than what she had heard so far. "What is it?"

"My dad's name wasn't the only name on the photocopied Ulaldi Foods documents."

"A co-worker?" Carolee guessed.

"Yes, someone named Mike Sorenson. I looked him up online because I was hoping to talk with him," Noah replied.

Excited, Carolee asked, "Have you tried to contact him yet?" It seemed now they were finally getting somewhere.

Noah took Carolee's hand. "I can't. He's dead." Noah hesitated before adding, "According to a newspaper article, not long before my parents were killed, he died in a car accident too. That wreck also involved faulty brakes, just like my parents' crash."

Carolee just stared at Noah. Her initial hunch that Noah was about to share something that she didn't particularly care to hear had been correct.

"I think Ulaldi Foods had my dad and that Mike guy murdered to keep them quiet about the link between Th2 dominance and Solenza." The words were hard for Noah to speak out loud.

Carolee certainly couldn't deny that under the circumstances, the crashes were suspicious, but she wasn't ready to accept what Noah believed as fact. "What do you plan on doing with this conspiracy theory of yours?"

Noah ignored the fact that Carolee obviously didn't accept what he was saying at face value. "I already talked to the police and prosecutor's office in Saint Louis."

"What did they say?" Carolee assumed these people would treat Noah like he was a lunatic.

"They said that both cases had been closed and there was some type of federal mandate requiring them to keep them closed." Talking about it was getting Noah as worked up as he had been that afternoon.

"But there's no statute of limitations on murder." With that last bit of information, Carolee no longer considered what Noah had been telling her to be just a theory. He had obviously discovered a cover-up to a crime.

"I know, but I really don't think the police will help me. They don't want to worry about a case that is more than twenty years old – especially one they have been ordered to let die. One police officer even confided in me that with the civil unrest and rioting that is going on in St. Louis right now, they just don't have the manpower to take on an old case. I think my only chance

would be to hire an attorney and private investigator. I just can't afford to do that right now. Heck, I can't even afford to replace my computer right now."

"Every time I turn on the TV, there is another story about bribery and government corruption. I still can't believe that the President is about to be impeached. I guess that corruption has trickled down to the local level in some places. So what do you plan to do?" asked a disgusted Carolee.

"Come look at this." Noah turned around to face the computer screen again and typed a new web address into the browser.

"What is it?" Carolee wasn't close enough to the monitor to make out the web page.

"My blog." Noah moved his head so that Carolee could see.

Carolee leaned in closer and looked at the screen. "Are you crazy? You're calling your blog *Ulaldi Foods Killed my Parents and They Want to Kill You too?*" Carolee was both angry and terrified by his recklessness. "Noah, these people have already shown they are willing to kill. Are you trying to get yourself mysteriously killed in car accident too!?"

"They didn't just kill my family Carolee. They are poisoning our *entire country*. Look at what they have already done to me." Noah held up his arms to reveal the scars that his doctors believed were caused by an additional autoimmune disease. He had recently undergone testing to confirm their suspicions.

Carolee recoiled her hand. Raising her voice she exclaimed, "Then let the FDA handle it. Send *them* copies of your father's reports." Carolee was beside herself because of Noah's behavior.

"I can't do that either," he said, trying to pull himself together. He had not expected this to turn into an argument with Carolee.

"Why not?" Carolee was convinced that Noah's anger and grief were interfering with his basic human instinct of self-preservation.

"I read more of the notes my father left today. According to him, someone in the FDA conspired with Ulaldi to keep the Th2 dominance studies quiet. And honestly, I think that the FDA is somehow behind the federal mandate to keep my family's death a shut case." Had Noah been watching this scene play out on a made for TV movie, he would have thought his words were a sign of a poorly written screenplay. But here he was, living with the consequences of the heinous acts made by unconscionable men.

Feelings of betrayal swept over Carolee and she put her face in her hands. "This kind of corruption can't be real!" *What was happening to the country that she dearly loved – the country that her older brother had given his life to defend? How could Americans do this to one another?*

Noah reached for her hand, “Carolee, it’s real and I need your support. *Please* try to understand. We can’t just turn a blind eye to this.” Now he was almost pleading with her. He *did* need her. Never in his life did Noah feel so alone as he did when he realized Carolee didn’t want to support him in this fight.

In the nine years that she and Noah had been friends, Carolee had never seen him cry. But the anger and frustration he was feeling at that moment had caused his eyes to brim with tears.

Carolee looked into Noah’s pleading eyes. *What else could he do? The police weren’t going to help him – words really were his only weapon in the fight against corruption that was probably more extensive than anything they could uncover or imagine.* She blew out her breath, then responded, “You’re right. I’ll help you. I think we are both going to get ourselves blown up in the process, but I’ll help you anyway.” Carolee looked around at the paper mess Noah had made in her home office. “Why don’t we shut down the computer for now and you go home and get some sleep. If you want, you can come back over to my house an hour or so before we have to be to work in the morning and do some more digging.”

Noah stretched his arms high above his head. “Good idea. I think the way I was tensed up in that chair made my back ache. I need a break from researching.”

Noah arrived on Carolee’s doorstep early Friday morning. Normally, they would have carpooled, but they took separate cars to work because Noah was only planning to work a half-day.

When Carolee came home late Friday after working several extra hours, she was surprised to see Noah in her kitchen boiling pasta. “Why are you still in town? I thought you got off work early today to go see Sammy.”

“I did. I’ve been to Bloomington and back already,” Noah answered.

Carolee peered over the pot. “Did you add any olive oil to that pot yet?”

“No, I didn’t know that I was supposed to.” For Noah, cooking usually meant opening a can and heating something in the microwave.

“It’s not a big deal. It just keeps the noodles from sticking together.” She put her briefcase down on a kitchen chair, walked over to the cabinet, and grabbed the oil.

“Guess what happened to me today,” Noah said with a bit of irritation in his voice.

“Someone blew up your car?” Carolee asked as she added the oil to the boiling water and then stirred the pasta. Lately, Carolee had been using sarcasm to mask her feelings of fear.

“You are just a barrel of laughs today,” Noah retorted. “Actually, our friends at Ulaldi are taking a little less violent approach. My blog was shut down by the provider this afternoon. Then, when I moved it to my own server, the new server was down within a few hours.”

“Here we go,” Carolee said, feeling her stomach start to churn with worry. “So is that why you came back from your date with Sammy so early – to figure out a way to get your blog back up?”

“No, I came home because there just didn’t seem like much of a reason to stick around after Sammy and I broke up. ”

Carolee was stunned. She was unable to speak for a moment. Then she wasn’t sure if she should ask why or assume that if Noah wanted to tell her, he would volunteer the information. She wasn’t left wondering for long.

After a moment Noah asked, “Aren’t you even a little bit curious as to why?”

“Well of course I am! I just wasn’t sure if I should ask or not. What happened?”

Noah was soft-spoken, “I read my latest lab results to her.”

“You didn’t tell me that you got your results back.” Carolee’s brow furrowed with concern.

“They just came in this afternoon.”

“And?”

“And I guess that Sammy couldn’t deal with her boyfriend having lupus.” Noah was filled with a gamut of emotions ranging from anger to disappointment. In a way, he understood why Sammy couldn’t handle it. If he could break up with himself, he would.

“Lots of people with lupus lead happy and productive lives now.” Carolee wanted to strangle Sammy. *How could Sammy turn her back on Noah when he needed her most?*

Noah touched Carolee’s cheek. “Not with this form of lupus. I have some new designer version that doctors had never even seen until about five years ago.”

“Maybe the test is wrong.” Carolee said the only thing of comfort she could think of. “Tests are wrong all the time.”

“The test isn’t wrong Carolee.” Noah tried to lighten the situation, “My one consolation is that this is going to make a great blog entry.”

“That’s not funny Noah.” Instead of following her statement with a lecture on how he was forever joking about things he shouldn’t, Carolee added, “Well, maybe you’ll get better after you haven’t had any Solenza for a while.”

The desperation that Carolee felt at that moment could not be described in words. She felt as though she were living in some kind of nightmare. She wanted all of it to just go away. She

wanted to be fourteen again and in braces painting fences with Noah to help earn summer money. When they were fourteen, Noah wasn't sick, "one nation, under God" actually meant something, and the biggest problem she had was earning enough money to buy the designer clothes she wanted.

Noah's voice brought her back to the present. "People were Th2 dominant before Solenza was in everything Carolee. Look at how sick my birth mom was. She didn't become Th2 dominant because of Solenza."

Carolee had an idea. Only now, she didn't feel like she was grasping at straws – She felt more like she was being led. "What about your dad – your birth dad, I mean.?"

"What about him?" Noah didn't understand where the conversation was going.

"He was a researcher that did testing on the immune system. His wife had serious autoimmune diseases. It stands to reason that he would have been looking for something to help her."

Noah shook his head. "That was over twenty years ago. If he had found it, I think it would have been patented by now."

Carolee wasn't going to let this go, "Not if he died before he could tell anyone. How close are you to the bottom of the research piles?"

Noah replied, "I haven't read even half of my Dad's notes, but I don't think you'll find what your looking for in them."

After dinner, Carolee practically pulled Noah into her home office and made him pick up his dad's notes. They spent the weekend reading the remaining research papers and Googling any unfamiliar words that might have been some kind of clue. The work was tedious and often frustrating. Many of the chemical and medical terms were over their heads and were difficult to decipher, even with access to an online medical dictionary.

Discontented, Noah moved aside the last of the papers that had been in their Ulaldi Foods pile. "That's the last one. There's nothing here."

Carolee was emphatic. "We are not giving up. It *has* to be here. I just know the answer is somewhere in these papers. I am going through your mom's medical records. Maybe something got mixed into that pile."

Noah wasn't holding out much hope. "I really don't think there will be anything in there."

Carolee, however, was like a dog with a bone. Eating and sleeping were a burden. All she wanted to do was continue their search. "We've already spent all of these hours, I am not giving up without going through the rest of the paper work."

Carolee divided the pile and handed half to Noah. The paper on the top of Noah's pile was a photocopy of test results indicating his mother had been diagnosed with lupus. The copy wasn't a very good one. He picked up the paper and held it closer to his face. "*So the apple doesn't fall far from the tree,*" Noah thought.

Carolee looked over at Noah. "Hey, there's something hand-written on the back of that paper."

Noah flipped the photocopy over and quickly scanned the page. There was a scrawling on the bottom that read *Dr. Chan – lupus – underground.*

His father had been searching for something. "Carolee," Noah said with the first excitement he had felt in two days of searching, "maybe you were right."

Noah typed Dr. Chan + underground + lupus into an online search engine. The only reference he could find was on a blog that was several years old. The blog's author had suffered from lupus and referred to an unnamed "underground lupus doctor". This doctor had helped the blogger to overcome the disease with herbs and a special diet. Within three months, he reported being symptom-free. Because the doctor had not used traditional pharmaceutical medicines to help his autoimmune patients, he had to practice "underground" or risk losing his medical license. Noah decided to email the blogger, explain his situation, and ask how to get in touch with this underground doctor.

"I guess all we can do is wait. I'm starving anyway, let's get something to eat." He was nervous and excited at the same time, but he wasn't too nervous to eat. Noah had never been too nervous to eat in his entire life.

Carolee really didn't feel like cooking anything. She wanted to celebrate at a restaurant – a restaurant with great chocolate desserts on the menu. "Well, I was about ready to suggest that we go out to eat, but if we did, we would be feasting on Solenza-poisoned food. I suppose I'll go to that new refrigerator of mine and see about making us an organic salad."

The two happily chatted over their vegan-style dinner. Both were convinced that the mysterious underground doctor would be able to help Noah.

As he took his last bite of broccoli, Noah said, "Let's go back and check my email now." They practically raced up Carolee's stairs to the room she used as a home office. Noah sat down in her black leather office chair. Carolee stood behind him with her hands on his shoulders.

"There is an email from the blogger," Noah said excitedly.

"And?" Carolee impatiently asked while trying to read over his shoulder.

"He says that to his knowledge, all of the underground doctors have been caught and shut down. He also gave me some website links and told me that if I knew where to look, everything I need to know is available on the internet."

Noah moved his mouse over the word “protocol”, which had been hyper-linked. The link was to a website with information on nutritional support of autoimmune disease. The webmaster was unknown. Noah wondered if the webmaster had to operate underground like Dr. Chan once had.

The site included a list of the foods, food additives, and environmental issues that cause Th2 dominance. The site also included a shopping list of herbs, amino acids, and different supplements that would help restore normal Th function.

Noah printed out the list and looked over it carefully. His family had been *subsisting* on the foods listed for as long as he could remember.

“This is it. Everything I need to know is on this one page,” Noah said as he handed the paper to Carolee. He shook his head as he thought of all the people that he knew needlessly suffering from Raynaud’s. He also thought of how his birth mother must have suffered.

“That’s all there is to it?” Carolee was skeptical to say the least as she looked over the printed lists.

“It’s the brass serpent on the staff.” Noah thoughtfully replied.

“Huh?” Carolee didn’t understand what he meant.

“In the Old Testament, fiery serpents were tormenting the Israelites. God told Moses to make a brass serpent and put it on the pole. The only thing the Israelites had to do to survive the serpents’ bites was to look up at the brass serpent Moses had crafted. The solution was so easy that it seemed ridiculous to many of the Israelite people. Not everyone who had been bitten was willing to look and live. In fact, many died needlessly.”

As Carolee thought about what Noah had said, she was overcome with the feeling that he *was* going to be all right. “You could call Sammy and tell her that you’re going to be fine now. Maybe she’ll change her mind.”

Noah put his arm around Carolee. “HmMMMM, I think I’ll just stick with the girl who was willing to be blown up with me.”

Carolee laughed, then rested her head on his shoulder. “Gosh Noah, you can be soooooo romantic at times.”

Story Follow up....

Although this story was written as futuristic fiction, it is based upon the truth – and the truth about Th2 dominance is *more* frightening than fiction. If you think that Th2 dominance is not a factor in your life, then think again! Th2 dominance has been on the rise in the United States since at least 1981...To learn more, visit

http://www.healthydivas.com/what_is_autoimmunity.html.

P.S. If you enjoyed this story, please feel free to share it with others.

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