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THE ANNE SWIFT INVESTIGATES SERIES

Anne Swift: Molecular Biologist Detective

Interview With a Molecular Detective

By T. Edward Fox

In the now twenty-plus years that Anne Swift has been leading a double life, she has worked on, and solved, all forty-seven of the cases to which she was assigned.

Now, she has decided to bow out of the business of being a molecular biologist and detective scientist for the FBI. Her two children are grown and married and she has reached her forth-seventh year on this Earth.

Many things have changed for her over the years. Her “handler” has changed a few times, the people she cherished working with have come and gone, and the strength she used to feel from the challenges now make her weary.

So, as she moves on it is agreed that she may finally tell her story to family, friends, and the world. An old family friend has agreed to interview her to discuss her colorful life. This is the (mostly) unedited results of that interview.

This book is dedicated to Anne. What else can I say?

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Interview With a Molecular Detective

FOREWORD

Anne Swift is a friend and an individual for whom I hold the very highest regard. And, as I have mentioned before, once some of her exploits became declassified, she turned to me to help tell those stories. And, I refused her. Silly, old Victor!

Why? You *and* Anne asked that question. My answer was both complex and simple: “I know you too well to do you justice.”

With that I turned her over to a colleague, and he has been chronicling her exploits over the past several years. It is my understanding that he intends to continue doing so for some time as there are many of Anne’s older stories that haven’t even been surface scratched.

It is into his hands that I have delivered Anne. I would have loved to have been there on the first day because it was on that day they actually met face to face for the first time. Up until then, all of their interaction had been via phone, email and a few video conferences.

His reaction to me was priceless. “My God, Vic! She’s a real beauty. Inside and out. And she doesn’t even realize it. How is that even possible?”

I don’t believe he thought my laughter was a sufficient answer.

Victor Appleton II

INTERVIEWER’S NOTE:

It was an honor to be selected by Mrs. Swift to interview her for this article. She contacted me over the Labor Day weekend and suggested that it might be nice to “get this over and done with” before Christmas.

We sat down for about two hours a day over a one week period missing only the chance to meet on Wednesday. Most of our time was spent sitting in a wonderful coffee shop/bakery in downtown Shopton, New York, where Anne and her family live. On I believe the fourth day she had some car troubles so I drove to her house where we were briefly joined by her husband, the famous inventor Damon Swift.

I feel it necessary to express more than a little shock at how well he appeared to have taken the news that his lovely wife had kept a deep, dark secret from him for most of their married lives, but genuinely shrugged it off as “just something that had to happen to keep Anne from going ga-ga sitting around the house.”

Go figure!

Anyway, you will find very few instances where Anne asked that the recorder be turned off, and those were instances where we ventured into areas that are still considered to be confidential. I have excised even the questions and have simply inserted {Not Acceptable For Discussion} in those places.

Now, you may be asking why even bother with that? Why not just skip the whole thing? Well, because Anne asked that we make it clear that she ins’t taking part in any sort of “tell all” here and that “omitting that you even discussed something is just like lying about it.”

So, here—warts, tears and joys included—is the result of those wonderful hours I spent with Anne Swift, Molecular Biologist and detective.

Thackery Fox

November 1st

T. EDWARD FOX: It is a pleasure to finally meet you in the flesh. We've been communicating for several years, but it is a true pleasure to be able to sit here facing you.

ANNE SWIFT: Well. Thank you. It does seem a little strange that we've never found the time to sit together. I mean, what with you writing the stories about some of the things I've been doing. By the way, and don't you dare leave this out of the finished piece, I have really loved reading about the Anne Swift that saves the world time and time again. (She smiles warmly and winks)

TEF: That is you, you know.

ANNE: (Laughing) Well, your Anne seems so much more in control of situations than this Anne ever was. I mean, you make it seem like I never make a mistake or take a wrong step. Everything just falls into place right in front of Anne's eyes. You do realize that it is never that simple.

TEF: I swear that I only put into the stories what I get from you and occasionally from Harlan Ames. Now, if you've been holding back on the Oops! incidents—

ANNE: Perhaps I have... a little. But, to be fair once I get a project finished I try to put it out of my mind. As I get older I'm finding that my mind is getting as ravaged by time as the rest of me.

TEF: Uh, not to make this sound like some slobbering admiration piece, but you are an incredibly attractive woman and I find it very difficult to believe that you are actually the age you say, or that you don't have one of those mysterious portraits up in your attic.

ANNE: (Blushing) I'm not sure how to react to that. But, I thank you for the compliment. So, what do we start to talk about?

TEF: The best place might be at the beginning. Tell me a little about your education.

ANNE: Oh, my. Well, I went to high school here in New York. A private girl's school that no longer exists. The only two things I think I learned there was how to flip my hair and giggle to attract boys, and that I had a fascination for very tiny things. I had my first look through a microscope in the seventh grade. Some sort of local pond water as I recall. (She sits back in her seat and looks at the ceiling, sighing) Next, our instructress—Miss McDade, I believe—the school called her class 'Exploring the Scientific World for Girls.' Good god, they might have just as well called it 'We know your little minds can't understand these manly things but just give it a try.'

TEF: Pond water, huh? See anything interesting or that your little feminine mind could comprehend?

ANNE: (Giggling) Oh, I most certainly did. Amoeba and other wriggly little things. I watched my first sexual exhibition through the eyepiece of that microscope. One becoming two, then two becoming four... it was *most* exciting. (She giggles again) But, the next thing we did was to look at our own blood. We each got a lancet and had to prick our own fingers and smear it on a slide.

TEF: Fun?

ANNE: Half the silly girls couldn't bring themselves to do it so I had to go along sticking them and prepping their slides for them. Two fainted at the sight of their own blood. And, one girl with a particularly dainty disposition vomited all over the girl next to her and that set off a chain reaction of about five others. (Picking up

her coffee and holding it in the air almost as a salute...)
Good times!

TEF: Let's skip over the clean up and get you to high school. Did you go through a giggly, girly phase or did your love of science keep you grounded, for lack of a better word?

ANNE: (Closing her eyes for a moment in thought) Well, it was a real battle for poor, little Anne. Firstly, it wasn't until I got into my Sophomore year that I developed anything remotely resembling breasts. Once they decided to show themselves, they *really* showed themselves! If I didn't notice boys, they surely noticed me. But, (she blushes) once I did find out they were interested I can't say honestly that I wasn't curious about them.

Let's just say that I tended to keep one eye on a microscope's eyepiece and the other on about half a dozen of the cutest boys.

TEF: Anything more you'd like to say or confess about the boys?

ANNE: Not that I want published where my dear husband, or worse yet, my snoopy daughter might read about it. Love you, Sandy, but you do have to admit that you are nosey nearly to a fault! Why don't we leave it at this: I finally, in my junior year, put two (she glances down at her chest) and two together and figured that once you get them to stop staring at your chest, boys could be very nice to be with.

TEF: Okay. Why don't we talk about your scientific side during those formative years? Did you, for instance, know that biology was going to be your educational love?

ANNE: Oh, gads no! You probably want a better answer than that, so let me see... well, the instructors at my high school tended to be middle aged, rather dumpy and

unmarried. Women and men. They really wanted the girls to think we were back about fifty or sixty years, back before the so-called sexual revolution and women's liberation and all that. They really wanted to get by teaching us about sewing and cooking and how to raise children, but the good, old state of New York, and some of the progressive parents, insisted they give us a rounded curriculum.

That included sports. At first, the school tried to get us interested in badminton, which could be played in dresses and was 'ladylike' enough for them. But the girls in a class three years before me finally turned the tide and got baseball, tennis and even touch football introduced.

TEF: Heady times indeed.

ANNE: (Laughing) Right. But we still had to wear dresses.

TEF: (I looked at her incredulously)

ANNE: (Laughing again) Right. Dresses. At least they allowed us to wear shorts underneath. They had to once they discovered that one of the girls used to, now what did they call that... Oh, right. She used to go commando.

TEF: To borrow an expression I've heard you use many times, oh, my!

ANNE: Oh, my, indeed. But getting off sports, they also broadened the curriculum to include a number of math and science classes. Those were my favorites!

TEF: How did you do?

ANNE: Let me start by saying that I thoroughly enjoyed the positive reinforcement they provided me. And, by that I mean that I excelled in them causing my mother and father to positively fawn all over their precious, smart-as-a-whip daughter. By the way, does that old *whip*

saying make any sense to you? I mean, in the logical and physical sense, getting snapped by a whip smarts all to get out! But people use it referring to brains. If anything, my brain sang with pleasure and not with pain when I found that their praise made me want to do even better. Very soon, I grew to love science over mathematics, but both of them were far and away my favorite and best subjects all through school.

TEF: Is that where you met your husband, Damon Swift?

ANNE: No. That would be his grandmother's story. She, by the way, also went to an all-girls school, but hers was just a short hop from Shopton. No, Damon and I met in college.

TEF: Okay. Looks like we are turning now, to your undergraduate years in college. I'll get back to Damon in a bit, but more science stuff, first. We all know that you continued looking through microscopes.

ANNE: Yes. I took as many biology and other science classes as I could, and then picked up a lot of pre-med type classes so I could study blood and body fluids and tissues. I'm actually not certain what I found so attractive about it, but everything intrigued me so much. I especially liked working on cell anomalies... cells that are supposed to be one way but are different, and then trying to discover why. Well, that all led to an undergraduate degree in Biology, but I was also part of the Honors College there and my advanced studies got me a Microbiology degree at the same time.

TEF: Ah, in looking ahead at my notes now I recall, it was in your Junior year that you met the special man in your life.

ANNE: Yes. *That* was when I met Damon. Gosh he was gorgeous. And smart. And I didn't like him at all at first.

TEF: I believe we need a few more details about that.

ANNE: Well, he was part of a fraternity of future scientists and other geeks, and I was in their sister sorority. Not that most of the girls were of a scientific bent, in fact most of them were rather more interested in their hair and makeup and even each other than they were in school. Or, men for that matter. Anyway, the sorority rules were that each sister had to go out on at least one date with a fraternity brother each term. It was my short straw draw that had me on a date with Damon for the Autumn Dance my junior year.

He picked me up all outfitted in someone else's suit—it was way too loose on him and far too short in the pants legs—and he came complete with a corsage. A pin-on type that he fumbled with every time he got it to within six inches of my breast. I kind of felt sorry for him. I knew he was a brilliant man, but I'd never seen anyone so flustered and unprepared to be close to a female. Not that I was thinking of doing anything other than a few dances and some polite conversation, you understand (her eyes twinkled as if trying to tell a different story.)

TEF: But, you danced, conversed, and eventually fell in love. He was a year older than you so that was his final year at the school. How did you feel about that?

ANNE: It took a few months for Damon to thaw out and relax, but by the new year we were dating exclusively and I had found out that he was—still is for that matter—a great kisser. I tried not to think about what would happen at the end of the year, but by about early April I was starting to feel absolutely miserable. He'd been accepted at MIT and already had a job offer from NASA once he got his Masters.

So, I did the only thing I could think to do. I doubled up on my courses and did summer semester while still finding time for being with him, then practically tripled my load in the fall and graduated by December.

TEF: And, then you followed him.

ANNE: And then that is exactly what I did. I got into a nearby school with an amazing Microbiology program where they were starting up a new degree program in Molecular Biology. I have to tell you, and Damon already knows this, but it was difficult for me to decide what was more important to me. Him, or the wonderful electron microscope they let me play with (she giggled here for about fifteen seconds.)

TEF: It was difficult for you, but you managed to make time for both. Is it true that you not only graduated early, but at the top of that first class and with a GPA that has never been equalled?

ANNE: Well, I did manage to get a perfect GPA out of it and I have heard that nobody has done quite that well, but it may have just been a fluke of that first group that went through the program. Isn't it the case that you always go easier on your first? No, that isn't right. I was way harder on Tom when he was young than I was with his sister. I must have given up on her early on. (Her eyes were twinkling, again.)

TEF: Academic modesty becomes you, Anne. Tell me a little about one of your professors there; I think you know who I mean.

ANNE: That would be Wiley Oswaldt. Bless his soul, I miss him terribly. Yes, Wiley was not only my favorite professor there, he was my Councilor as well. I can recall about ten little tricks he shared with me about getting the best results out of the electron microscope that I used right up until I retired a few months ago.

TEF: Well, we'll talk about him a little more later. But you also met a woman who became both a friend and colleague. She also has the distinction of being the first black woman to ever earn a Masters Degree in

Microbiology.

ANNE: Ah, yes. Lyda Morrison. She's a real pistol, as my grandmother used to say. Got her Masters while I was doing mine, and later went on to get a Doctorate in Epidemeology. The FBI let her come in a couple times to help me with projects. She has the most amazing capacity to look at a slide filled with blood or mucus or whatever and to see things that advanced tests sometimes have trouble spotting. Like the time we had those meteor fragments hit the Earth. She came in, looked at the image I had taken using one of Tom and Damon's high-quality digital microscopes, and simply declared, 'Yeah. You've got Black Plague and Anthrax going on there. Anything else I can help with?' just as nonchalantly as that.

TEF: Anyone else who helped shape you as the scientist you are today?

ANNE: (Biting her lower lip for a moment) Hmmm. In one of my core courses, an English class, my professor was Charlie Weller. He felt that creativity was first and foremost, starting with, of course, writing, but more than that. I think he used writing as an analogy for how you live your life.

He used to play the strangest, and often the most beautiful, music in class. Everything from Mozart to The Beatles to Beasts & Children. It wasn't just noise to him. To me, for that matter. Those albums were masterful expressions of how the composers and atrists thought.

TEF: Any lessons there that were transferable to science?

ANNE: (Nodding) Absolutely. We spent and eentire week dissecting the *Abby Road* album from The Beatles. Track by track the class discussed what might have been going on in, what was their names? Paul and

John, I think. (I nodded and she smiled) Right. We talked about how the tracks interconnected and told,, as vague as it was, a kind of story. And that is what I took to my chosed field of study.

TEF: The ability to see interconnectivity?"

ANNE: Yes. That. And, boy has it come in handy with some of these FBI cases I've been involved in. (She gets a far away lookin here eyes as she seems to be contemplating some of these cases. I gave her a minute.)

TEF: All right. Let's leave school. You graduated just a term after Damon did. NASA was next for you two.

ANNE: It was. I met him down in Florida where he already had purchased a nice little house. We got married three days after I arrived and it was long hours of work for him and wedded bliss for me. He was, as is generally known, part of the Space Shuttle team, working on improvements to the first two shuttles and went on right up to the completion of numbers three and four.

I got pregnant, twice, and alternated my time between working for a blood plasma research company and being a mother.

Then, NASA was hit with an austerity program, just before the *Columbia* disaster. Damon had made several recommendations that he felt were ignored and that might have led to safety changes being made on the shuttle. Protective measures that would not have made a difference in the first launch that went so horribly wrong. (A tear runs down her cheek.)

But, they ignored him. A Congressional investigation immediately cleared him, but his faith in his superiors was destroyed.

TEF: So, he left NASA soon after that?

ANNE: Well, his intent was to grit his teeth and spend another year there, but circumstances at his father's company, what we now call the old Swift Construction Company, forced him to leave soon after *Columbia*, take the reins of the company, and bring it back from the brink of bankruptcy.

TEF: You moved up to Shopton and settled in with your two young children, Tom and Sandy, and put the scientific life behind you.

ANNE: I did. And I was happy to do it. I discovered that I really love being a mother and a wife. I would never have wanted to have another child beyond my two wonderful kids, and it was a great life. And, once Damon got the company back on its feet, we had a nice home life together.

TEF: What changed?

ANNE: One of the men Damon hired was an ex-Secret Service man named Harlan Ames. A super nice giant teddy bear of a man able to switch from charming and gentle to full-action mode in a heartbeat. It was when we had been back in Shopton for about three years and Tom was getting ready for first grade and Sandy was ready for day care, Harlan asked me to lunch.

He was there with another man. Quimby Narz. Quimby was a local FBI man, although, and I guess it is okay to mention this now, one time Harlan either slipped up or mistakenly called him a CIA man. Anyway, Quimby knew all about my education and my work in Florida. He was very complimentary. It was during that meeting that he asked me, 'What would you think if your Government asked you to put your education to use helping save lives?'

TEF: I think we know what you said, but you tell the story.

ANNE: Well, I said how pleased I was that he thought so highly

of me and that if it were all the same, I would rather continue being a wife and mother and not get involved.

Harlan nodded at Quimby and Quimby thanked me for meeting with him and left. Then, Harlan put on the pressure. Nicely, of course, but he told me a few things he swore me to keep secret. Of course I can talk about them now, but back then it was top secret.

TEF: (I was laughing here) Okay. But I have a note here that says you didn't exactly word your refusal quite the way you just told me. So"

ANNE: (Blushing) Fine. I told Quimby Narz that I would rather swim in a pool of my own vomit than give up being a full-time mother. It wasn't at all the sort of thing a lady says, but it was what I meant at the time. Besides, I was young.

TEF: You got a phone call, didn't you?

ANNE: Yes. The President of The United States called me at home that afternoon. You can't imagine what it feels like to hear that stentorian voice booming over the phone lines, telling you that only you can do this thing. It's like in Star Wars when the Princess is projected in front of Luke. "Help us, Annie Wan Kenobi... You're our only hope!" (she laughs delightfully at the memory).

TEF: So, did that do it for you?

ANNE: No. I was polite and thanked him for his call, but it took the combined efforts of Harlan and Quimby another few weeks before I saw the validity of what they were all telling me. And, another couple of weeks while all the details were being worked out on how to keep all this from Damon and everyone else I knew. And that wasn't easy!

TEF: Describe that, please.

ANNE: For one, when the kids were younger I knew I only could work between about nine in the morning through three in the afternoon. Luckily, there were only a few projects each year they needed me for, so I developed a long list of excuses that I used over the years for needing to not pick up one or both kids, or for not being home when they got back from school.

TEF: Do you remember a few of them?

ANNE: Oh, certainly. There were numerous shopping trips, visits with dear friends, several adult education classes, and even a few symposiums on micro and molecular biology. I had to 'drive' to most of my excuse locations and 'fly' to the symposia. It's a good thing that the airlines have strict rules about divulging who is flying on what aircraft or else a suspicious husband might have been able to check.

Dear, dear Damon, once the company began building airplanes, offered to teach me how to fly so that I could get around more easily. I love flying but for years had to pretend to be scared silly of it so he wouldn't make me get that license. As it was, the FBI had to cover for many of my excuses by bringing me bags of groceries, clothing from stores out of the area and even receipts from places like Thessaly and Oswego and Manhattan. (Laughs) It was very interesting to watch them at work on certain occasions when I had to be gone for several days at a time or overnight. The time and imagination that must have gone into covering for me...

(Turns somber) And, then there were the four times that I contracted whatever deadly thing I was trying to get a handle on. One almost cost me my life. That one required that I have an incredibly bad case of influenza with a week in the local hospital to cover my recuperation. Poor Doc Simpson. He's Enterprises' doctor. He finally had to be read in on what was going

on so that he didn't inadvertently reveal anything to Damon. He is one smart man and had me figured out inside of two minutes on that occasion. He was about ready to raise the roof and call for an investigation of the doctors at the hospital over misdiagnosing my illness.

Thank heavens that Harlan has always known. He had a private word with Greg—that's Doctor Simpson's first name in case any of your readers didn't know that—and swore him to Doctor/Patient privilege.

TEF: You seem a little sad about that. Is it safe to ask why?

ANNE: I always felt that Greg treated me differently after that. We remained friends, but there was something in the way he looked at me. Well, water under the bridge now. I'm just glad that he saw the reasons for all the secrecy and put that above loyalty to Damon.

And, I am forever grateful that Damon never held anything against either Harlan or Doc once he found out the truth. I am married to a saint!

TEF: Saint Damon?

ANNE: (sputtering as she spoke) Oh, gosh. Never that, please! I once said he was Saint Damon and someone mistook what I said and thought I was saying Damien, like in those horrible horror movies. He told me to never call him that in public again. Can we erase that? No— I promised you warts and all for this interview, didn't I? Leave it in.

TEF: I can omit it if you want me to. I don't want to shed any ill light on anyone.

ANNE: No. Leave it. He will get a laugh over it. Like so many htings, it is in the past. (She looks at her purse and picks it up. I went to get another coffee.)

We called it a day as Anne received a phone call and had to rush off to be with her son, Tom, and daughter-in-law, Bashalli, as they were having their first child.

November 2nd

TEF: So, how did yesterday go? Boy or girl?

ANNE: I am the very proud grandmother, although much too young for it, of a beautiful little seven pound, three ounce girl. She has her mother's coloring and her father's light blue eyes. She's going to be a real stunner! I even spotted a few fathers staring at their own babies in the viewing room and then at little Mary as if they wished their baby was as beautiful.

TEF: Grandma's vision being blurred by a little pride?

ANNE: Perhaps. But tempered with the fact that two nurses told me privately that they truly thought Mary is the prettiest newborn they had ever seen. Nothing like Winston Churchill, and most people not directly involved in their particular baby think that newborns look like him... even the girls!

TEF: We left off with you talking about some of the excuses you devised in order to explain your daytime and some night time absences. Any close calls?

ANNE: (Taking a very deep breath) Many! Far too many. As you know, the lab in Shopton was under one of the many downtown businesses. Now, I've only ever told you about it being below the Merchants & Co. Bank. That was always a cover story, even once the FBI started declassifying some of my little adventures.

TEF: So, can you tell us all where it actually is?

ANNE: {FBI WARNING: Not Acceptable For Discussion}

TEF: Okay. On to the next subject. To date I've written ten stories about your work, a couple of which I have been officially requested to hold off on for another year or two. As I understand it, there are something like four dozen more of your cases still classified. Will I ever get to tell the entire range of your exploits?

ANNE: Probably not. I checked with my last handler before agreeing to do this interview and was told that there are at least half of them that will remain classified under National Interest and Safety concerns for at least the next decade or longer. But, there are a couple that will be declassified early next year that I'm itching to tell you about. And, now that we've finally met I will want to talk to you about them in person.

TEF: I am honored. And, I am now getting that itch along with you. Any hints?

ANNE: Well... a little international intrigue and a bit of alien abduction and—

TEF: Whoa! Alien abduction?

ANNE: (Nodding but saying nothing more, does the old zip across the lips gesture.)

It turned out that the "alien abduction" story was cleared a mere two days later and before this interview was printed. I wrote and published that story as *Anne Swift and the Alien Anticoagulant Anomaly*.

TEF: I should know better than to ask. Okay. So let's talk about some things that the stories never get into. What can you tell me about Quimby Narz?

ANNE: Oh, poor, dear Quimby. A darling man and as I understand it, much happier since his retirement. Now

he is living out in Arizona in a retirement community playing golf and probably trying to organize a neighborhood watch program. I don't actually know. He has only ever sent me one post card. (She sighs, heavily) He is the sort of man that you might see in any realistic spy movie. I don't mean the suave, piercing-eyed macho man. Not the Cary Grant type at all. Bless him but I've never met a man with less of a sense of humor, or even a sense of irony, than him.

No, if I had to describe him, I'd say he is the epitome of nondescript. Slightly balding, a touch of gray scattered around his head and about five foot eight. Under his suit I would guess that he is or was in pretty good condition, but he kept that permanently under cover. Oh, and he is the only man I've ever driven with that scared the... well, you know. Scared the 'S' word out of me. He was forever looking at the satellite navigation screen on whatever car or van we drove in. Rarely at the road. I am very thankful for everything he did for me over the years, but I swear that he took a dozen years off my life with his crazy driving.

TEF: Was he an easy man... uh, person to work for?

ANNE: Hmmm? I know he'll pick this up so I have to be careful what I say, don't I? Only kidding, Quimby, if you are out there. I'm fairly certain that he would agree that we had a love-hate relationship. I loved what I was doing—most of the time—and I hated it whenever I had to really pressure him to get my way.

TEF: Obstinate?

ANNE: Oh, no. Not that. Quimby was constantly stuck between the bureaucracy that powered the entire operation and his understanding that the science we needed to do can't be set to Government timetables, restrictions, or even political whimsy. I guess I told you about the time I threatened to resign right in the middle of one

project? (I nodded) I did? Oh, that's right. You've written the story about Wiley's nearly losing his daughter. Okay. So, that's an example of the kind of tension that could bubble over. He was being pressured to keep things from Wiley and I was furious that he could even conceive of doing that.

TEF: Would you have actually walked off the job?

ANNE: (Placing a finger to her chin and thinking for more than a full minute) That is an unfair question.

TEF: Now, I'm confused. Why is it unfair?

ANNE: Because my respect for Wiley would have overridden my anger at Quimby and his heartless masters. For his sake and for the sake of his daughter, I would have remained at the lab.

But, poor Quimby was in an untenable position. Do what's right, or do what you're told to do, especially when it ostensibly comes from the very top? I now know that I put him in one hell of a spot, but the idea of making Wiley work hard on a project without telling him his one and only child was a victim of the very thing he was working on? Come on. That's not the American way, is it?

TEF: I'm supposed to remain neutral in this, but I'm with you. And, I tamed things down when I wrote the story. Hopefully that was all right with you.

ANNE: It made me out to be a better person than I recall I was back then, so thank you.

TEF: You are welcome. So, back to Agent Narz. Was that his real name? Quimby Narz?

ANNE: (Laughing with delight) Oh, gosh no. The Quimby thing was from an old comic strip when I was a little girl. *Quiverin' Quimby Gumbucket, the Shakiest Farmhand*

in the West. I'm fairly sure that Don Knotts, the actor, based his nervous character on Quiverin' Quimby. The reason I came up with that name for the stories was that he had a habit of quivering his chin when he was thinking hard about something.

TEF: And, Narz?

ANNE: Famous game show host name. It isn't actually all that far from Quimby's real last name, actually. And, before you ask, I can't tell you his actual name. Just take it that Quimby Narz was one man, a fine man at that, and that I have meant no disrespect to him by giving him that moniker for the stories.

TEF: Well, this may be getting ahead of tales to come or it might be one of those 'can't talk about it' things, but most of what we know about your relationship with Agent Narz is all in the lab or little excursions into the field. Did the two of you ever have any adventures that were different from those?

ANNE: Hmmmm? Well, yes there was come to think about it. The details haven't been cleared but let me think how I can refer to it without giving anything away. Oh! Got it! In broad terms there was a project, uh, somewhere around ten years ago, where Quimby and I ended up getting knocked silly by an electrified fence, tied up in a building that was set on fire, and only rescued when my own son was experimenting with a fire fighting helicopter and helped the local fire department put out the blaze.

TEF: Did he know?

ANNE: Nope. And, until this gets published, it will continue to be 'just one more thing Momsie never told me.' That's his nickname for me. Momsie; has been since he was about three. There was little to tell after we were rescued, except for the subterfuge used by the FBI in

getting us out of the building and away before anyone could spot us, but there was a lot of things that went on before we were captured. But, I suppose those will have to wait.

TEF: How was it working in the field with him? For that matter, how was it working in the field? I know it was never your first choice.

ANNE: First, second, third... all the way down to not even my tenth choice. I hated it. Mostly I hated that I needed to go out disguised. Shopton is so small... well, okay. It is over thirty thousand people now but when all this began the population was just over twelve thousand. That gives you a high percentage chance of being recognized. Except for one thing. Harlan always insisted that I not be photographed with Damon. Or, later, with the kids.

And, it just hit me why that was. He never wanted my face to be too public and certainly not associated with Damon or Tom. That crafty devil. God I miss working with him!

TEF: Okay. Let's take a little detour and talk about him. What do you remember most?

ANNE: (Tears begin welling up in her eyes.) I remember the big guy as having the lightest embrace I've ever felt. His arms could just envelop you but his squeeze was almost restrained, like he knew he could crush you if he really hugged.

He came to work, as I said yesterday, about three years after Damon and I moved to Shopton. That's right. About the time Tom turned six the summer before. You know the ex-Secret Service part. But do you know why he left that branch? I didn't think so. Well, Harlan fell in love with a wonderful woman about a year earlier. She had one of those laughs that makes you think of

fine crystal. High-pitched and absolutely clear. They got married on a Saturday, and he was part of a Vice Presidential protection detail the following day.

(Anne needed a moment here to collect herself.)

It was that terrible day when that gunman killed five agents and the Vice President, and wounded three more agents before they got him. Harlan got him. He strangled the man to death and beat his head against the steps there at the Lincoln Memorial so severely that — well, the man died. The next day when Harlan was standing in front of the head of the branch answering all of the standard questions, he collapsed.

TEF: Was that when he had his first heart attack?

ANNE: No. It was from the bullet he had taken two days before that grazed his heart. He was slowly bleeding to death internally. They got him to a hospital and patched up, but his new wife had a nervous breakdown. I can't blame her. Anyway, he took retirement with disability and they came through Shopton on an extended honeymoon camping trip. Damon met them at a little store and took an immediate liking to them both.

We had them over for dinner and a few drinks—which, by the way were among the last that Harlan had—and stories got swapped around until Harlan let it slip that he was now out of work. And why that came to be. Damon asked him to consider coming to work at the Construction Company as the old system of a couple night watchmen wasn't sufficient any more. Plus, Damon was working on plans for a second facility—Enterprises—and knew he had to have a real on-the-ball security team when that came about.

TEF: And Harlan fit that bill?

ANNE: Oh, absolutely. A year after they moved to Shopton, they had a little girl. A lovely little girl who has grown

up to be quite a wonderful young woman. Sadly, her mother passed away when she was seven and Harlan found himself managing security at the Construction Company, the recently new Enterprises and the newest facility at that time, The Citadel. Plus, he was father and mother to his daughter.

It was so sad when he had that heart attack—the one that almost made him retire.

TEF: Can we talk about his involvement in your second life?

ANNE: Right. Of course. Well, Harlan was both a go-between for Quimby and me, he was also the one who kept Damon from finding out about things. If the FBI couldn't manage to get me away for whatever reason, it was frequently Harlan who got Damon away from the office—and often away from Enterprises—to free me up.

Harlan also was the only one who knew, or at least I'm pretty sure he knew, about a Government team that used to occasionally communicate with me via text message on my computer. They disbanded about a year ago—or, so they informed me—but they helped me several times with information I couldn't find anywhere else. And, they helped Tom and Damon on a few special occasions. Anyway, Harlan must have been the way they had access to all our computers. Once Enterprises got built, Harlan was absolutely iron-fisted when it came to computer and communication security. Nobody could have gotten into our systems if he hadn't allowed it.

TEF: A bad thing?

ANNE: Never! Never intrusive and always useful if just a little enigmatic at times.

TEF: Anything more about Mr. Ames you want to share?

ANNE: He was an amazing sounding board for me. I can't

count the times I felt like tossing in the towel where he didn't take me to coffee or lunch and give me a little pep talk about the importance of what I was doing. And, darn him anyway, you looked into his eyes and listened to his voice and you believed. You couldn't help but listen and believe.

Can you image what he might have been able to do if he had gone into politics? It's such a shame he's on an extended leave of absence. It would be nice to have him here today—(A large, Pakistani man comes over to us) Oh, hello, Moshan. Mr. Fox? May I introduce you to my son-in-law through Tom's marriage to Bashalli, Moshan's sister. Moshan Prandit, this is Thackery Fox. He's the author who has been writing my stories.

MOSHAN: A pleasure, Mr. Fox. Can I get you anything? A fill up on your coffee?

TEF: No. Thank you. It is nice to meet you. I hear that you've become an uncle.

MOSHAN: (One of the biggest grins crosses his face and he nods vociferously) Yes. Bashi and Tom have made the most beautiful daughter. My niece.

TEF: You sound very proud of your niece.

MOSHAN: I am proud of her, of course, but I am more proud of my sister, Bashalli, and of her husband, a man who has become my true brother, Thomas. (Anne blushed at hearing this praise). Bashalli has taught me many things since we emigrated from Pakistan.

TEF: Care to elaborate on that a little? After all, I understand that she is your younger sister.

MOSHAN: Well, I must get back to work, but I will tell you that until Bashalli became a woman and forced my father and myself to see that she was more of an American woman than she was Pakistani, neither of us had much tolerance for her choice of boyfriends. We hoped that

she would forget about American boys and allow us to select a suitable Pakistani man for her to marry.

TEF: I imagine that did not go over well.

MOSHAN: (With a snorting laugh) You might say that. But, she persevered and made *us* change. Made us accept that this nation that adopted us is not our old homeland. It is our home, and we discovered through Bashalli that we needed to adopt it as much as it adopted us. (He kisses Anne on the cheek and excuses himself.)

TEF: That was quite the admonition.

ANNE: Yes. I was. I know what a strain it was on both him and his father. They almost drove his mother away she despaired so much for her daughter. But, it worked out very well.

TEF: I hate to change the subject, especially to one that is not as joyous as your grandchild, but may we talk about Wiley Oswaldt?

ANNE: Dear, sweet Wiley (her eyes tear up a little again). When he had a recurrence of his cancer last year I had a horrible time. I was just starting to have symptoms of an early entry into my change of life so emotions were already rampaging, and his senseless disease just tore me apart. I miss the man. I really do. I only hope that he can get through this. It's his second time and he is not a spring chicken, as he used to tell me, but he is a strong man and his daughter is an incredible young woman.

She will take care of him. I hope I get the chance to see him again...

TEF: Should we take a few minutes break here?

ANNE: (Sniffing) No. Let's go on. Wiley Oswaldt was the best scientist I ever had the honor of working with. If there ever was a man who reminded me of a combination mad scientist and giant teddy bear, it was Wiley.

(She clears her throat and her voice steadies) I know that I get all the credit for most of the cases I worked on, but at least half of them would have come out differently, probably not for the better, if I hadn't had Wiley there. His insight and experience were a phenomenon.

TEF: Can you tell us about your favorite project that included him?

ANNE: Well, the absolute best one is still classified, but the close second was the time we worked with a couple dozen large blue plastic drums that turned out to be filled with the remains of a number of cloning experiments gone wrong.

TEF: That one has been well documented. It was the first of your stories I was allowed to write. Was there something that didn't make the news that was special?

ANNE: Well, I didn't find out about this until almost three years later, but as you might remember, the girl at the center of all the cloning, Eileen, was very, very ill at the end and spent her final few weeks in a secret isolation room in the basement of the hospital. Because of my family commitments I only was able to go see her once before the end. And then I found out that Wiley, who lived more than three hours drive from Shopton, didn't want her to die alone.

He made the trip up here at least three times a week and was with her when her heart stopped.

TEF: Did he tell you why he did that?"

ANNE: The big old softie... on that hospital bed, surrounded by machines and tubes, he didn't see a young woman who had killed the man who made her what she was, didn't see her as the insane creature her condition turned her into. What he saw was a young woman who might have been his own daughter—they were fairly close in age—and he knew she had nobody to care.

TEF: So, he did?

ANNE: Yes. He did.

TEF: Before we get to some of your other coworkers, I want to bring up two other things. Both having to do with your well known dislikes.

ANNE: I can't imagine how you could limit it to two, but go ahead.

TEF: Okay. In no particular order they are your code name, Barbara Boone, and dealing with what you once termed, "unacceptable lies."

ANNE: Whew! Two places where I might dig a hole for myself. I hope I have the sense to jump in before I get bitten.

All right. Barbara Boone. (She makes a disgusted face) That code name was ridiculous. AS I've told others, it was as if someone said, "Hey, I know. Daniel Boone was a great frontiersman. Love the name. Let's call our next female agent Barbie Boone. Great combination of him and that little doll all the kiddies are crazy about!" Poop!

For starters, they might have asked first. At least I convinced them to change the first part to Barbara. Can you imagine? Look at me. Do I *look* like a Barbie? (I shake my head) Right! I don't even look like a Barbara. If anything, I look like either an Anne or possibly a Patty, and that's with a 'y' if you please.

TEF: So, you seem to be lightly hinting at the fact you didn't like the code name? (Anne snorted here.) If you had been given complete control over your code name, what would it have been?

ANNE: (Without hesitation) Diane Davis. Still alliterative, but it would have rolled off my tongue without me having to swallow the bile I felt rising every time I had to utter it.

TEF: How about the lies?

ANNE: Yeah! Please tell your readers that I am grimacing right now and looking rather put out by the subject. Anyway, it was both the lies Quimby had to tell me, or just told me on his own, that were about the final straw in my working with the agency.

I can certainly take being fibbed to in order to protect my feelings. Heck, my double life was one great big lie to my family, but when lies came between me doing what I was hired to do, and even endangered mine of other people's lives, that was where the line got drawn.

TEF: And, you feel that Quimby lied to you far too often?

ANNE: (Nodding) Yeah. Can we just leave it at that, please?

TEF: Sure. Well then, let's talk about a few of the other people you worked with over the years. I've got a list of five, so you pick. (I show her the list)

ANNE: Oh, let's do Nigel first. What a great man he is.

TEF: Good. So, I suppose we need to start with your impressions of him and then talk a little about that coffee method of his.

ANNE: My one true weakness and something I now only can get at home. But, first to him. Nigel Drake is a man of many talents and educations. Let me see if I can remember them. First, he holds a Doctorate in Paleontology. Then, he has another in Herpetology, is a practicing General Physician, as well as once having had a television program he hosted. Oh, an I believe I read something about him now also having a Doctorate in Epidemiology.

He came it to assist the first time with the case about the dinosaur DNA that was killing people. He brought a combination of talents all rolled into a single person that I now believe we would never have had if there had been three different people involved.

TEF: Why do you believe that?"

ANNE: Well, in the most basic sense he was able to cross reference things inside his head that might have been difficult if more people were involved. We try to not work with “my opinion is more important than yours” people, but in my lab it has always worked best with the fewest experts involved at any given time.

TEF: And he helped make contact with someone else who—and I know she is one of the people in another case you can’t, yet, tell me about—was a great help in finding a treatment for the problem.

ANNE: Yes. I’m pretty sure that I can say her name here. Dr. Gladys Buckingham used to work at Bethesda Hospital. She and Nigel are old friends from, I guess, his early days in medicine. She had a patient who had been exposed to the toxic DNA and was flailing around trying to keep a fellow physician alive.

Ultimately they failed, but it is unlikely anything Nigel might have suggested would have been in time. He took it rather hard for about an hour and then shook it off.

I understand that he went out and got royally drunk the night after we finished that project.

TEF: The one thing he brought into your life was the thing with the coffee.

ANNE: Yep. Double brew. Bane of my existence and godsend to the weary mind and body.

You probably want me to repeat how to do it. (I nod.) Okay. I’ve finetuned this over the years. So, in a coffee maker you make a slightly weak pot of coffee and just let it cool to room temperature. It actually works best if you thin chill it for a few hours. Next, get rid of the old grounds, add another normal helping of fresh grounds, pour the cold first batch of coffee into the maker—topping up for any lost liquid with fresh water—and then brew the coffee.

TEF: Thus, the name “double brew.”

ANNE: Yes. And, while it takes a little getting used to, and generally needs both some whole milk and a little honey or sugar, it does the trick. Better than any energy drink or coffee shop mess with an extra shot or two. The fresher the better.

Oh, and for the readers? Do not, and let me repeat that—make it in all caps if you will—DO NOT attempt to water the end result down and use it for another pot. It will be foul and bitter. IF you don’t drink it within the hour, dump the rest out.

TEF: But, doesn’t that mean you throw out a lot of coffee at home?

ANNE: No, and it’s because I have two coffee makers. I use the 12-cup one to make a couple of batches of the first brewing and put that in a glass container in my fridge. Then, I use my 2-cup mini-brewer to do the double brewing. Smart, huh? (She wiggles her eyebrows at me and smiles.)

TEF: I have to admit that is certainly smart. But, getting off favorite recipes and back to Nigel Drake, how many other times did you work with him?

ANNE: {FBI Warning: Unacceptable to list case details.} A total of five times. He actually disliked coming over the the States very often. Said his home, work and heart were in England and he only came over as a favor he owed someone in a high position in our Government.

TEF: Any idea who that might be, or have been?

ANNE: He told me once and swore me to eternal secrecy, so sorry to disappoint, but I’m not telling.

What I can tell you is that Nigel Drake had what he used to call a “freeze and formulate” thing. He would sort of go all stiff and not focussed on anything. It was when he did some of his best thinking. According to

Nigel, he sort of went around a little corner in his won mind where he could have absolute silence and concentration. It rarely lasted more than three minutes, but boy was it a shock the first time!

It isn't anything I told you about on the dinosaur case, but near the end of the first day I thought he had had a stroke. He went stiffm his eyes sort of glazed, and his breating became very shallow. Wiley and I managed to get him off the stool and onto the floor and I had opened his shirt to check his heart when he refocussed and stared at me.

TEF: Did he say anything?

ANNE: (Laughing at the memory) Yes, he said, "My dear woman, if you plan to sexually molest me you need to ask your father leave the room. I cannot possibly concentrate with him hovering like that! Have him make us some tea." Then, he shook his head and realized where he was and what had happened. He explained it to us and we all had a good laugh about it.

After that he always tried to notify anyone in the room that he was about to go into what he once termed, "concentration camp." A bit politically incorrect, I know, and you can omit that if you believe it might tarnish him somehow.

(I contacted Doctor Drake, told him about the revelation, and had to listen to his laughter for a full minite before he gave his whoehearted permission, asking only that I tell you he had not meant it to be demeaning in any way to anyone who suffered in such a location during any war.)

TEF: Anything else about him?

ANNE: Not much other than if I ever went back to that lab and could not get Wiley Oswalt there with me I would want Nigel Drake. He's an exceptional researcher, scientist,

and professional.

TEF: Sound's like someone I would like to meet some day. Well, I let you select one so may I pick the next person?

ANNE: Go ahead...

TEF: Penny Cooper.

ANNE: Penny, Penny, Penny. Sure. I'd love to talk about her, or at least her back a few years ago when we first worked together.

TEF: So, does tha tmean you've sworked with her since?

ANNE: (She looked blankly at me and shrugged.)

TEF: Ahh. Got it. So, about Penny?

ANNE: A brilliant girl coming from a military background. I'm fairly certain I never got her complete and factual story, but that isn't important. In the end she proved to be a great assistant when something came up and nobody else was available.

Quimby brought her in and we hit it off immediately. I suppose she saw me more like a mother figure, or at least the instructor, while she was the daughter or student.

TEF: Unlike you she seemed to me to enjoy field work. Is that a correct assumption?

ANNE: Yes. She didn't shy away from it. In fact I seem to recall that she was quite eager to hit the road when we were investigating that exploding locust-like case. She got me out of the lab, practically hauled me around the upper U.S and into Canada.

(Anne paused here to collect her thoughts.) Penny also came to my rescue when I did a really stupid thing.

TEF: Do you want to elaborate, or is what I put in the book enough?

ANNE: Give me a second to think about that. In the mean time I've got to hit the L-G-R.

TEF: L-G-R?

ANNE: (Smiling at me) Little Girl's Room.

TEF: Welcome back. Do I need to repeat the question?

ANNE: No. I started out thinking I didn't want to say anything, but the more I considered it, the more I think I need to set the record straight.

TEF: Oh. That almost makes it sound as if I didn't put it down on paper correctly. If need be I can go back to my publisher and have them make a change.

ANNE: No. And here is where I look like a bit of a hypocrite. All my blathering on about people lying to me, and here I sort of lied to you.

The truth is that near the end of that story I had you believe that I was so miffed at Quimby that I rushed off and faced down some other federal agents, finally forcing one to take a shot at my feet.

TEF: (I looked at her to see if she was going to continue. She appeared to be struggling with the memory)

ANNE: Listen. What happened was that once I found out that Quimby had been passing along the lies the FBI was forcing him to, I was so furious and had had it right up to here (indicates about a foot over her head) that I grabbed his gun off his belt holster, jumped into the car and raced off.

I actually threatened the gate guard at the research facility. I pointed Quimby's gun at him and the other guard got his weapon out, aimed at my legs for what I think they call a "cripple shot," and pulled the trigger.

TEF: What happened then?

ANNE: The bullet went between my legs just above the knees,

taking a small slice out of my left one, before hitting the ground yards behind me.

Next thing I knew I had been body checked and knocked to the ground, Penny had her weapon out and had shot the guy with the itchy trigger finger.

TEF: But, that's substantially what you told me before.

ANNE: Except to tell you that the man Penny shot died at the scene. She did what's called a double-tap—basically two shots aimed at the same spot in rapid succession. Hit him in the neck, and he dies pretty much instantly.

(At this point Anne broke down crying. I gave her five minutes to find her voice again.)

TEF: We need to take a break, don't we. How about if we meet here again tomorrow.

ANNE: How about my place at eleven. I'll make lunch for us.

November 4th

TEF: Great house, by the way. It's pretty big. Does it ever seem too big now that Tom and Sandy are off on their own?

ANNE: You can't imagine how large it is, that is unless you have children who have moved out. (I shook my head.) Let me tell you that the kitchen alone doubled in size within a week of Sandy getting married to Bud Barclay. Not that she ever spent much time in there.

TEF: Do I sense a story there?

ANNE: Only that my darling daughter will never in her life be confused with being an accomplished chef. She doesn't have the temperment, and I don't think she'll scream too much at me for telling you that.

Oh, I'll get the hands on hips, glare, and "Mother! How could you?" from her, but in the end the truth is that she just doesn't have the temperment to cook anything more than basics. Even after a year of marriage.

TEF: Any little tattle tales?

ANNE: (Chuckling) I gave her a recipe for something I like to make right at the heart of green bean season.

TEF: Green bean casserole?

ANNE: No, but that's a second thing to tell about. No, this is for something I've always called Gree Stuff. It is par-cooked green beans and boiled potatoes that get pureed along with some heavy cream, butter, and nutmeg. It gets spread in a baking dish and goes under the broiler until it browns.

TEF: That sounds tasty. So, what happened?

ANNE: Dear, darling, does not pay attention Sandy put everything into the food processor, started things up

and left the room for about five minutes. According to Bud, once it was cooked it was like a giant, green pencil eraser. He said she dropped one piece while trying to serve it and it actually bounced. (Anne's glittering laugh goes on for half a minute.)

But, her green bean casserole also deserves mention. She had the recipe off the can of those fried onions, and I had given her a card with my changes.

TEF: And she still managed to not do it right?

ANNE: The basic recipe calls for cream of mushroom soup. My recipe calls for using cream of chicken soup.

TEF: What did Sandy use?

ANNE: Chicken noodle soup! Needless to say it was a food fiasco and she swore she would never cook again. Of course, she was back in the kitchen two days later, but her culinary life seems to be filled with little "oops!" moments like those.

TEF: I don't want this to turn into a pick on Sandy thing, so can we talk about some of the other people you've worked with?

ANNE: Well, there was Margie Turner, of Sodium Girl as she used to call herself.

TEF: Tell us about her.

ANNE: It was back when those deadly blue spheres were discovered. The ones it turned out were filled with a concentration of sodium that can't exist in the real world.

I walked into the lab one day in the middle of that to discover this pixie-ish redheaded girl sitting on my favorite stool. I could barely believe that she might be schooled in anything, much less have an advanced degree in chemistry but she surprised me.

Together we discovered both the actual content of the

orbs, figured how it was possible to have that double concentration of sodium as a liquid at room temperature, and where it all came from.

TEF: Sounds a little cut and dried, Anne. Did she do anything incredible like juggling five of the spheres while yodeling and riding a tricycle?

ANNE: No, but at the end I found out that she had two tattoos. One on her back and one on her front. The one on the back was a haiku. You know what those are?

TEF: Sure. Five, seven and five syllables. Japanese art form I understand.

ANNE: Right. And, I remember hers very well.

Sodium makes salt
and it is not very nice
when spilled on your skin.

TEF: Pithy. Why?

ANNE: She also had a terrible scar on her right thigh from college when she got chemically burned by concentrated, hot sodium.

TEF: Oh, then I rethact the pithyhting and wish to substitute the word, *meaningful*.

ANNE: (Smiling) Substitution allowed. But, as memorables that little poem is, it was the tattoo on her chest that was an eye opener.

Now, I have to say I never specifically asked to see it, but she is proud of her body art and had no qualms about pulling her shirt up and showing me.

TEF: It was...

ANNE: Two atoms. One covereing her left breast and the other her right. Care to guess which ones?

TEF: Ohhhh (I groaned) Sodium and... well, another sodium?

ANNE: Nope. Sodium and chlorine. She said it was in honor of her first lover who said her body tasted of salt. It isn't something I would do, but, having perfectly round breasts lent themselves to the tattoo.

I had to tell her I feared that her electron paths would cease to be circular when she gets older. (Anne now looked at me to see if I caught the meaning.)

TEF: Can I just say that I am going ot have to look up the structure of atoms to get that, but please allow me to pretend I laughed and laughed and laughed at that before we moved on?

(Anne pulled out her tablet computer, called up an illustration of a basic atom and showed it to me. I both turned bright red as well as finally understood wht she meant.)

ANNE: So, I only worked with her the one time and only for a few days, but she left images burned into my brain. At least one I see will be with you for quite some time as well!

TEF: Yeah. It's gonna be hard to erase that image. Well, anything else about her. Other odd body features—no, strike that. I don't need any more brain images. So, anything else about your working relationship?

ANNE: Not really. She was like a string of one-timers that Quimby brought through whenever I needed an expert is specific areas. Over the yeras I needed her soidum know-how, a person with advanced knowlege of canine physiology, another who came in for avian-borne diseases. Wait; she came in twice but just for an hour the second time and only to check my work. But, you see what I mean.

TEF: Right. Then, if we've beaten that horse, can we talk about some general things from the job? (She nodded.) Fine. Did you ever have a case where you failed to come

to a conclusion?

ANNE: Me? No. And I hope that doesn't sound like a brag. In all, of the many labs sprinkled around the country I can only think of hearing about three failures. Of course, even I might have never been told about everything. Unless we were working in tandem with a specific lab there was little of mostly no interaction and communication.

TEF: Can you tell me, in general terms, what those three failures were?

ANNE: Ummmm, I think I can. The first one I had any knowledge of involved a new variation of the HIV virus. The lab was tasked with seeking a way to defeat the virus using either medication or some outside influence. Like radiation or something else.

I see you looking for more details. Well, what I can tell you is they did not succeed. In fact, the virus mutated terribly during one experiment and got out of containment. Nearly a hundred lab rats died within days it was that virulent.

The good news is that as soon as the host died, so did the virus. It mutated into something that needed a constant supply of body temperature blood to survive. The rest of the viral cultures were frozen in a vacuum chamber and then incinerated.

TEF: Did any one of the researchers come in contact with it?

ANNE: No. But they were in a bit of a panic for the better part of a year while undergoing weekly blood tests.

And that, now I think about it, may be the only one I can say something about.

TEF: Okay. New subject. What has been the most fun case you worked on?

ANNE: That I can tell about? (I nod) Hmmm? Well, without

naming specifics I would have to say it was a case, or as I used to think of them, a *project*, dealing with a canine disease that made champion showdogs sterile.

TEF: Okay. Other than getting to work with dogs, what was fun about that one?

ANNE: The getting to work with dogs part, obviously. For years when the kids were small we had a pair of bloodhounds, Ceasar and Brutus. Huge dogs with slobbery tongues and dribbly mouths. If not for those features I would have had them inside the house and probably sleeping on the bed.

TEF: And, back to the *project*.

ANNE: Right. Well, this one has been declassified for several years but I've never thought it interesting enough to tell you about.

TEF: Give it a shot.

ANNE: As I said before, champion show dogs were coming up sterile and their owners were frantic. As you may know, third only to bull and champion horse semen, dog semen is a huge business. I often think it is the only reason some of these owners show dogs. I mean, they turn them over to handlers and barely interact except at shows and then only when a dog wins.

TEF: Sounds a little disheartening.

ANNE: It is. But the case came in as many of the dogs, all males by the way, had attended a show in Providence, Rhode Island the year before. We were allowed to bring in a dozen of the little guys for study. Blood tests, semen analysis, saliva, poo. The works. I even took ear wax scrapings in order to see if there was any microinfestation.

Nothing except we did discover that the actual sperm cells were not dead. They had been chemically stunned and would never, pardon the expression, swim in the

Olympics. They would laze around and not do the one and only job they are designed for.

TEF: You said chemically stunned. Does that mean they had been injected or poisoned in some way?

ANNE: Yes. It was, we finally found out, a drug created back during the Cold War in Russia and was part of their chemical warfare research. The idea was to infect the enemy—the U.S. military men—with it so they would not be capable of reproducing and would either be depressed, or commit suicide in their despair.

TEF: Damn nasty!

ANNE: Damn right!

TEF: But you identified the reason. Did you find the source? The culprit?

ANNE: We found both and all because of something my father used to tell me. Criminals are just that because they aren't smart enough to be good citizens.

The culprit began advertising his dogs for stud within a few months of the sterile dogs being identified. His ads went along the lines of, "You know all those inferior dogs who can't do it anymore? Well, my dogs have special immunization from that. Prices reasonable."

I had Quimby assign an agent to accompany me to a small hamlet of Mysteic, Connecticut, where we found the man, his kennels, and the freezer wher ehe kept cubes of meat that had been infused with the chemical.

TEF: He went to jail?

ANNE: He attempted to flee and wrapped his car around a telephone pole. He will be paralyzed from the chest down for the remainder of his life. Can't even move his arms to control a wheelchair.

And, before you ask, yes. I think he deserved that and can't say that I find anywhere in my heart to feel any

pity for him.

TEF: Okay, last question. What has been the project that you have been happiest to complete? Not the process, the completion.

ANNE: (Anne reached over and patted me on the knee.) Finishing this interview, Thackery. I've enjoyed it, and I believe it helps me close out the MoBiDet life, but I am glad it is over.

That doesn't mean I won't assist on any other stories, but this has been a cleansing experience for me. Thank you.

TEF: No, Anne Swift. On behalf of the many people who either do or may never know that you saved them, thank *you*!

ANNE SWIFT will be back soon in a new mystery:

ANNE SWIFT and the Pernicious Parasite Pandemic

