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Your main commentary should be focused on *the expression of quantity*. Other topics may also be addressed.

At a little after five in the morning the Trion garage was just about empty. It felt strange being there when it was all but deserted. The fluorescent lights buzzed and washed everything in a kind of greenish haze, and the place smelled of gasoline and motor oil and whatever else dripped from cars: brake fluid and coolant and probably spilled Mountain Dew. My footsteps echoed.

I took the back elevator to the seventh floor, which was also deserted, and walked down the dark executive corridor to my office, past Colvin's office, Camilletti's office, other offices of people I hadn't met yet, until I came to mine. All the offices were dark and closed; no one was in yet.

My office was all potential—not much more than a bare desk and chairs and a computer, a Trion-logo mousepad, a filing cabinet with nothing in it, a credenza with a couple of books. It looked like the office of an itinerant, a drifter, someone who could up and leave in the middle of the night. It was badly in need of some personality—framed photographs, some sporting-goods collectibles, something jokey and funny, something serious and inspirational. It needed an imprint. Maybe, once I caught up on my sleep, I'd do something about it.

I entered my password, logged in, checked my e-mail again. Sometime in the last few post-midnight hours a companywide e-mail had gone out to all Trion employees worldwide asking them to watch the company Web site later on today, at five o'clock Eastern Standard Time, for "an important announcement from CEO Augustine Goddard." That should set off the rumor mills. The e-mails would be flying. I wondered how many people at the top—a group that now included me, bizarrely enough—knew the truth. Not many, I bet.

Goddard had mentioned that AURORA, the mind-blowing project he wouldn't talk about, was Paul Camilletti's turf. I wondered if there was anything in Camilletti's official bio that might shed some light on AURORA, so I entered his name in the company directory.

His photo was there, stern and forbidding and yet more handsome than in person. A thumbnail biography: Born in

Geneseo, New York, educated in public schools in upstate New York—translation, probably didn't grow up with money—Swarthmore, Harvard Business School, meteoric rise in some consumer-electronics company that was once a big rival to Trion but was later acquired by Trion. Senior VP at Trion for less than a year before being named CFO. A man on the move. I clicked on the hyperlinks for his reporting chain, and a little tree chart popped up, showing all the divisions and units that were under him.

One of the units was the Disruptive Technologies Research Unit, which reported directly to him. Alana Jennings was marketing director.

Paul Camilletti directly oversaw the AURORA project. Suddenly, he was very, very important.

I walked by his office, my heart hammering away, and saw, of course, no sign of him. Not at quarter after five in the morning. I also noticed that the cleaning crew had already been by: there was a fresh liner in his admin's trash can, you could see the undisturbed vacuuming lines on the carpet, and the place still smelled like cleaning fluid.

And there was no one in the corridor, likely no one on the entire floor.

I was about to cross a line, do something risky at a whole new level.

I wasn't worried so much about a security guard coming by. I'd say I was Camilletti's new assistant—what the hell did they know?