

matters familiar



e. g. fabricant

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DEDICATION

For Frank and Betty, for the gifts of life and love—theirs,
mine, and ours—and
For M. A.; BeeEss; Tomiss; Jerome; J. L.; Fuffy; and The
Brat, for helping me fill in the blanks.

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7 Medalists



He noticed her first while on the Stairmaster in the hotel's fitness room. (In truth, she may have noticed him then, too—or before. Selfish indifference and no eye contact were strict guidelines in these preliminaries.)

She staked herself to a treadmill and removed her Reebok Hipster warm-ups. *Nice*, he thought. *Champion JogBra, Chickabiddy Retro Boardshorts, Nike cross-trainers; athletically stylish. Jewelry. Eye and lip liner. A player.*

He'd claimed the spa when she emerged again, after changing. As she busied herself with a deliberate deck shower, he updated the inventory. *Black mesh, high-cut Polo tank—Caesarian? Stretch marks? No breast cups; outstanding nipples. Quality salon tan, no lines. Subtle—therefore, expensive—surgical enhancements: nose, lips, gluteals. Breasts? Can't tell; good contours. Why leave the weaker jaw line? Interesting. Above-average manicure and pedicure.*

He feigned interest in the pool rules as she lowered

herself into the sanitized froth. Their heads and eyes moved in non-synchronous orbits. *Wait. Wait. Now.* Discreetly, he tucked in his TYR Heatwaves Male Racers to accentuate his genitals. He stood, grasped the handrail and climbed, hesitating on the top step. Slowly, his eyes moved to her fingertips, lingered at her tennis bracelet, and glided up her arm into her pupils. *Violet—real, or lenses?*

"Cartier?"

She smiled, holding his gaze, but did not reply.
My contact. Your move.



She was already there, conducting business, when he met his own clients that evening. He'd confirmed the sighting by doing a men's room fly-by, two tables away. *Evening Business Utility: DKNY separates; DuF fragrance; pearl choker and matching bracelet. Gucci sling-backs. Coach briefcase.* She feigned interest in her dinner partner's tablet electronics.

No further intelligence to be gathered through the meal, since their table was out of his seated line of sight. He disguised his slight alcohol intake with accustomed ease. His own commerce concluded with light, conversational cuddling to take the edge off the deal making. He called an end to it, got up, and walked his *confreres* out toward the valet desk, leaving his paraphernalia behind. He loitered politely, bid them away, and turned to see her disappearing into an elevator. Withholding judgment, he went back into the restaurant and over to his table. There it was, under his Dunhill cigarillos—a magnetic key-card, with a room number in neat cursive applied to it. *Mont Blanc Meisterstuck Classique Rollerball, fine,* he guessed. *Game on.*

To give her time to prepare the home field, he lin-

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writes and lives in San Jose, California. This is his first collection of short stories.

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