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# The Scientist's Wife Has an Opinion on Her Rival

Jana Harris

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# *The Scientist's Wife Has An Opinion on Her Rival*

JANA HARRIS

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He speaks freely  
of their relationship,  
he says, we're working  
on Helen today,  
or, we're not  
working on Helen,  
she's in the freezer

The scientist's wife  
asks, why her?  
he says, because  
her cells multiply  
with astonishing speed

Each night she wonders  
if he brings pieces  
of Helen home  
on his hands,  
she is afraid her rival  
will take hold  
in the mattress,  
the kitchen,  
move into the house

He is proud, he boasts:  
the day after  
he put Helen  
in the freezer,  
he found parts of her  
growing  
in a neighboring lab

This is what  
the scientist's wife  
knows about her rival:  
she was black  
she died  
in a state hospital  
in the year her husband  
was born,  
and the cancer  
which killed her  
lives on, growing  
even in a freezer

The scientist's wife  
wonders why  
no one asks:  
what kind of a life  
would grow something  
that terrible?  
in the scientist's wife's  
opinion, Helen Lane  
has given new meaning  
to the meek  
who shall inherit  
the earth,  
that thing which  
Helen's womb made  
is more powerful  
than all of them

Each day her husband  
leaves home to study  
another woman's parts,  
she begs him not to,  
someday, she tells him,  
you'll bring her  
home, I just know it

He shows her  
photographs  
of Helen's cells  
growing,

she tells her husband  
he's looking for clues  
in all the wrong places,  
it's not there,  
she says,  
the answer

it's not there

He speaks freely  
of their relationship,  
he says, we're working  
on Nixon tapes,  
working on Hoover,  
she's on the train

The secretary's wife  
asks, why aren't  
he says, because  
she calls me every  
week and she's

Each night she wonders  
if he brings pieces  
of Nixon home  
on his hands,  
she would love to  
I'll take her  
in the morning,  
she listens,  
during noon the house

He is proud, he knows  
the day when  
he put Nixon  
at the front,  
he found parts of her  
ground  
in the neighborhood

The wife  
he says, we're  
working on Nixon  
tapes, working on  
Hoover, she's on  
the train

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