

This is an excerpt from *Imaginary Year*, a work of serial fiction by Jeremy P. Bushnell. Visit the *Imaginary Year* website (<http://www.imaginaryyear.com>) on Mondays and Fridays for new updates.

28 / PROBABLY

Janine puts a whiskey and soda in Thomas' hand.

—Thanks, he says. It's become a habit for him to drink whiskey with Janine when he's over at her place. Maker's Mark. He moves the glass in a circle and listens to the ice clink.

Janine goes back to the kitchen, opens up a bag of walnuts and throws them into the salad-in-progress. —So, she calls to Thomas. —There's this woman at work? She pauses for confirmation.

—Yeah? comes Thomas' voice from the other room.

—Yeah. Her name is Clark; she seems pretty cool. I think she and I are into the same bodies of theory.

—Uh huh, says Thomas.

There are two things that immediately make him feel nervous.

- 1) He knows that Janine is bisexual.
- 2) He knows that Janine's relationships are nonmonogamous.

It is true that Janine has not taken other lovers in the four months or so that she has been having sex with him, and this has been convenient, it has allowed him to operate as though Point 2 were not true, to fully sidestep the question of what he would do if she took another lover. How he would feel. And yet a part of his mind always knew that she could,

that, eventually, she *would*. He has kept one eye open for signs. He wonders if this is the first.

—I don't know, Janine says, from the kitchen. —She just seems cool, is all. I've hung out with her and this other guy Paul a couple of times after work. I think it would be good for me to hang out with someone who knew some more theory; all my old grad school books are just gathering dust around here.

—Yeah, Thomas says. —You're probably right.

He sips his drink.