

"If I lift the rear wheels clear of the ground, you give me four thousand dollars?"

"That's the bet."

"Done," Simon said. "This is too easy," he whispered in Thomas's ear, which was enough to make Thomas grin stupidly and wonder how much he stood to benefit by his brother's win.

Simon cunningly had trapped the rich guy. "All you have to do is find a schmuck who doesn't know you're betting on a sure thing," Simon repeated as though Thomas's visual impairment also affected his ability to comprehend complicated concepts such as cheating. Simon walked out of the bar followed not only by the rich guys, but by every customer in the joint. Simon retrieved his loading strap from the back seat of the Fiat. He attached the strap to the rear bumper, routed the strap across his back, and prepared to leg press the rear wheels of the Fiat off the ground.

Witnesses made side bets and positioned themselves to verify the pending feat of strength. Simon recalled that the curb weight of the Fiat was 1,300 pounds, so he needed to leg press about 650 pounds. *Plus or minus whatever*, he thought. This was the easiest money he had ever made with the exception of the recent lottery windfall itself.

Simon made a great show of inhaling and exhaling as he had seen weight-lifters do on television. He squatted deeply once to stretch his leg and back muscles. He raised himself from the squat long enough to take slack out of the loading strap. He winked confidently at his brother Thomas, who refrained from winking in return, because, when a man wearing an eye patch winks, he is out of the vision business, and Thomas didn't want to miss knowing the outcome of his twenty-dollar side bet.

Simon put all his effort into the leg press. He was able to extend the Fiat's shock absorbers to the full length of their travel, but his first thrust didn't get the rear wheels clear of the ground. Veins the size of licorice sticks protruded from his neck and forehead. Early in the thrust of his second attempt, something internal popped like the sound of a cork separating from a champagne bottle. Simon deflated like a ruptured balloon, the Fiat struts compressed, and the weight of the car fell back onto the suspension springs. Simon whimpered as he fell limp onto the rear of the car. In silhouette, Simon appeared to be fornicating with the Fiat.

"I think I broke my back," he announced in a dispirited voice.

"That didn't sound good," Thomas said somberly as he helped his brother recline onto the sidewalk. "What made that popping sound?"

"I don't know," Simon whispered. "I could be sterilized from the waist down."