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MAGAZINE

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beware!**
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betrayal and
cybersleuthing

**3 simple
questions that
solve every
dilemma**

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and go!**

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time, sanity

Come home happy

**Two foolish
habits of otherwise
smart people**

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**9 ways to
heal the world
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Got a minute?
GET FIT FAST

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SEPTEMBER 2006



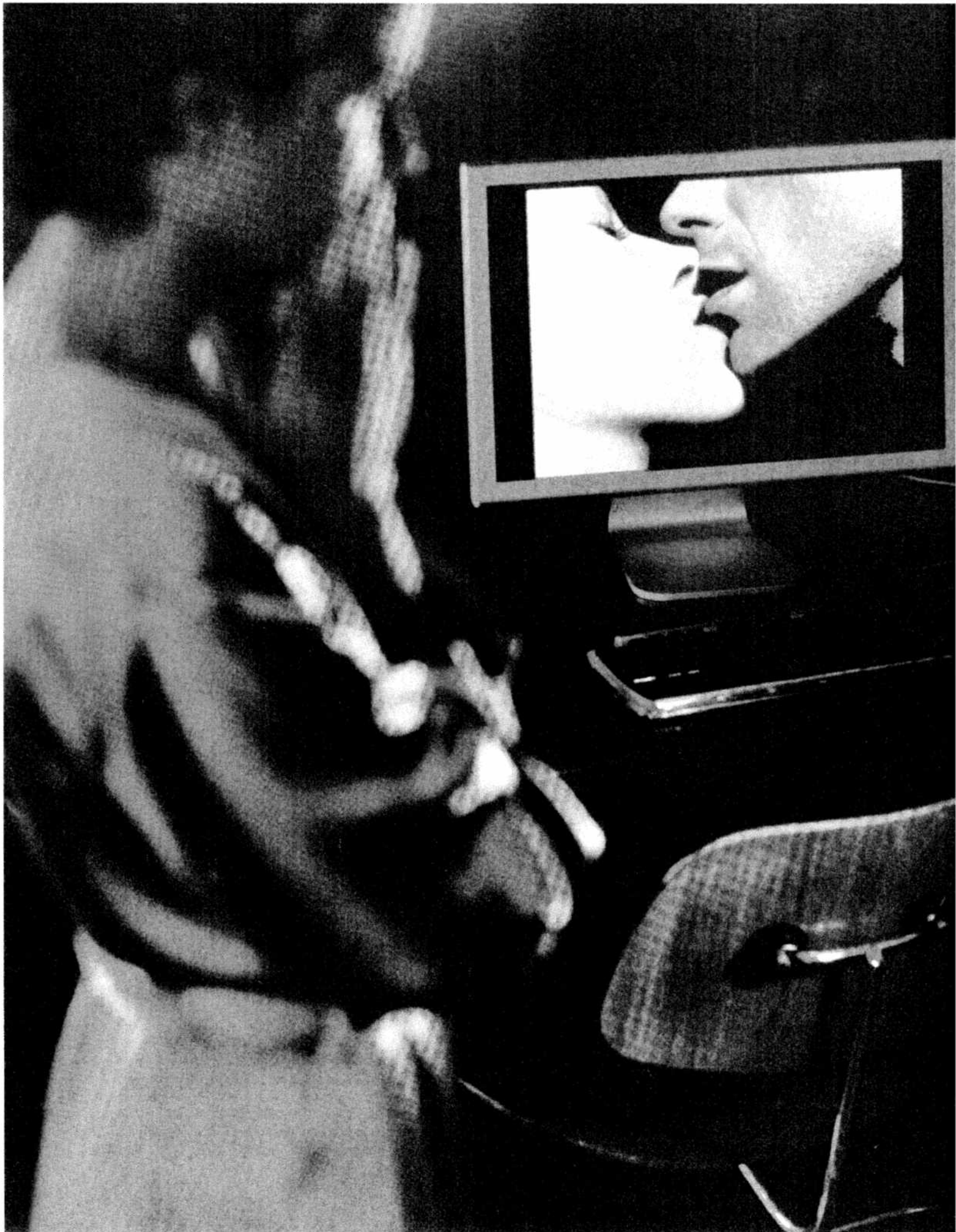
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> **YOU GOT NAILED!** Going through pockets, checking
> collars for lipstick, hiring a seedy gumshoe to tail the louse—so retro! Today's
> suspicious spouse has an arsenal of spyware that can slip her right into her
> husband's computer, read his incriminating e-mails, and track his clandestine
> Web visits. But is cybersnooping smart? Ethical? Is it even legal? LIZ BRODY meets
> some women who've caught their husbands with their virtual pants down.

Photograph by David Harry Stewart



> "I LOVE YOU...VERY, VERY MUCH..."

I want you so much." Brenda took in the words on the screen. She was alone at her husband's computer in their home office, using a new program that let her see chat room messages he'd sent earlier. The writing didn't sound like him, and the smiley face icons punctuating the sentences were not his style. She looked closer at the monitor.

And then she saw the "Sue"—"I love you, Sue, very very much." He also called her "baby," an endearment he had never used for his wife in 32 years of marriage. Names can never harm you, the saying goes, but that "baby" hit Brenda like shrapnel.

I'm on the phone with her two weeks later, having met online in a group called Internet Chat Infidelity. "Honey, I got plenty of time," she says, taking a deep drag on her cigarette. After a sudden uneasy feeling, at 54, two kids, two grandkids, and three dogs, Brenda (who, for reasons that will become obvious, can't reveal her last name) loaded her husband's computer with all the latest electronic spyware she could afford. And with it, she's been watching every key he strikes, every message he writes. Sounds like a Sting song, and a sting operation it is.

She tells me that she first got interested in her husband's PC seven years ago. At that time, she was managing a convenience store. "My life was great. I thought I had a happy marriage; my daughter was expecting her first child," she says. "Well, one day he was clicking away on his computer and I felt, *Something's just not right.*" She barely knew where to find the "on" button, but while he was at work, she scrounged around his desk, discovered passwords on Post-its, and got into his e-mail. He was corresponding with five different women, using a special program called ICQ Voice Message to send his spoken affections, one of which Brenda managed to record. She plays me a snippet:

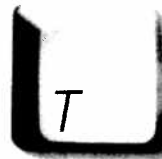
"Baby...I want to tell you about my voice"—his tone comes over the receiver low and intimate, the kind of smooth persuasion known to unhook a bra, and he confesses that he's taped the message numerous times to get it right—"I love you more than anything in the world. Please don't do anything to ever change that."

Just listening to this betrayal floors me with a sickening rush I imagine Brenda felt when she first heard it, the sensation of glancing down from a great height, knowing with a swift vividness that you could fall a very long way. "This," she says, "is what brought me down to ground level. I went over the edge." Raging, she confronted him, pounded her fists into him—"I was gasping for air; I was so angry I could hardly breathe," she says—and he finally admitted to playing around online. There was nothing more, he swore. He would stop. And for the next seven years, he did, or he seemed to, until just a few weeks ago, when Brenda had that second intuition.

Now he's back to his old games and she's worried that his activities may be carrying over into the flesh. But she isn't counting on Post-its to find out. Through friends who happen to be detectives, she got wise to the new spy equipment, and her arsenal now includes a keylogger, a tiny device that plugs in where the keyboard hooks up to the computer and captures whatever he types; Internet surveillance software designed to record both sides of the dialogue; and a data recovery program for resurrecting deleted files. Just for good measure, she planted a GPS tracking unit the size of a pack of chewing gum inside his truck so she could monitor where

he goes and how long he stops.

The evidence of his cyberlife is painful, like the e-mail he wrote to one woman telling her he'd applied for a different position at work—"He never said a word about it to me"—which cut deeper than all the "nasty little pictures of men and women doing things" she found him swapping with e-mates. Brenda is not sure how long she can continue to live with this, but 32 years of marriage are hard to throw away. In a sense, she's waiting to catch him crossing a line that leaves no question. Meanwhile doubt spreads like rot through everything she does. And as much as she hates all this prowling around, feeling that the truth is within her grasp, she says, "is putting my mind at ease."



TOO MANY OF US KNOW THE ANGUISH OF SUSPECTING infidelity—the sink of the gut that says yes, it's happening, while the mind and the man placate, "Don't be so neurotic; nothing's going on." Monogamy, unfortunately, seems to malfunction with alarming frequency. And when it does, honesty is not exactly on the tip of a philanderer's tongue, which leaves the other party either to sedate herself on denial or to start searching for evidence. But the days of rooting through suit pockets for receipts and checking collars for stray lipstick stains are over.

I first heard that the infidelity business had gone high-tech over

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> "Virtually everyone who chea
> It's not poetry, prose, flowe
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dinner with my cousin, James Mintz, not long after his private investigative firm, the James Mintz Group, with its industrially hip Manhattan digs, was written up in *The New Yorker*. (He's got six offices and, over the years, has had clients like the city of New York, Morgan Stanley, and the Beatles.) I was thinking about a friend who'd recently walked in on her fiancé pants-down with the dog sitter, a story I found particularly disturbing because my husband is working 3,000 miles away and it's hard not to wonder what kind of overtime he's up to.

Jim's poker face never quite hides the mischief in his eyes, which somehow makes him an easy guy to confide in, much to the chagrin of the many shady characters who've ended up confessing their worst misdeeds to him.

"So," I ask, peering over the Greek menu. "What does one do if she suspects her husband of being unfaithful and wants to have him followed? What's the protocol?"

"It's expensive," he says, trying to decide if he wants the squid.

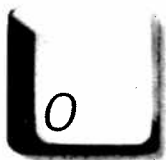
"Say the person could pay." I throw him a meaningful look.

"We don't do domestic cases," he says, with a look back that

means the “person” better not be me. He’s got operatives, obviously—he mentions a guy by the name of Buddy Bubaloo, something like that. “But,” my cousin puts down his menu and says, in his best slide-it-under-the-table sotto voce, “tailing is old-fashioned. These days it’s all about the computer.”

He points out that people having affairs now inevitably e-mail or make arrangements on the Internet. And, he says, in the hands of someone like his computer forensics guy, an adulterer’s hard drive can become a lurid libretto of guilt—full of detailed messages, text documents, Web sites visited, directions MapQuested, all retrievable long after they’ve been deleted. An electronic memory, after all, never forgets. “People are shocked at what you can bring back,” he says.

Other experts in the secrets-finding trade agree. “Virtually everyone who cheats will do it electronically,” says Sharon Nelson, Esq., whose firm, Sensei Enterprises, in Fairfax, Virginia, handles computer forensics for about 100 divorce cases a year. “What we read scorches our eyebrows much of the time.... I mean, it’s not poetry, prose, flowers. Most of it is extraordinarily explicit and damning.” And professionals aren’t the only ones dragging hard drives for clues; in the past five years or so, a whole do-it-yourself spyware industry has also flourished, allowing doubting spouses to become at-home detectives.



ON THE WEEKENDS, YOU CAN USUALLY CATCH Beverly (she, too, thought it wisest to keep things on a first-name basis) at a rodeo, watching her boyfriend ride bulls. The 44-year-old has no cow-girl ambitions herself, but she’s never been afraid to take a beast by the horns. Four years ago, when she was living in the South, raising two children, her husband of



High tech spying has broken up marriages and put husbands behind bars.

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more than 11 years, James, started visiting his mother with dutiful regularity. “They didn’t speak for months and all of a sudden he’s going to see his mom three weekends in a row?” Beverly asks incredulously. She also stumbled on a suspicious e-mail—one of those “If I call two times and hang up, you’ll know it’s me” sort of messages. She confronted James about whether he was seeing another woman, and he confessed that he was, she says. “I was devastated because all my family and friends had been asking, ‘Do you think there’s somebody else?’ And I kept going, ‘No, I really don’t think so.’”

They decided to split up. If Beverly had been in a stupor about her husband’s infidelity, she was jolted awake when he decided to fight for custody of their daughter and son, 8 and 10 at the time (she wanted to take them back to her home state; James felt strongly that everyone should stay put). Fighting back, she hit the Internet. “I did a search looking for spyware so I could see what he was doing,” she says. Spector was the program she chose—a powerful surveillance tool that records e-mails, chats, instant messages,

so you can view exactly what the person has seen (if you can covertly install on someone else’s computer, although the company states that you need a license agreement if you don’t own that machine). One day, at work one day, Beverly slipped her new software onto her desktop and hit download.

Most nights James unwound with games on the computer. Beverly was in their son’s room, two feet from the boy’s bed. Beverly. When she went to see what Spector had uncovered that James and his Yahoo! Dominoes partner were doing, she found something a little dicier than dotted blocks. The fact, his girlfriend. “I was able to read a lot of things they were saying to each other,” Beverly recalls. “She was saying things about me. Very personal things. One time she was saying my bra size, and he’s like, ‘Well, gee, I don’t even know that.’ ‘Hold on, I’ll find out.’ He goes and checks in my e-mail. He wanted to know how much I weighed, how tall I was. He had e-mailed me, probably a whole lot more than when he

She found it tough, too, when he wrote to the girlfriend that this wasn't the first time he'd cheated on Beverly—"and it had happened before I thought anything started getting bad," she says, her voice tight. But the real dirt—the evidence she could use in court to fight his custody suit, Beverly thought, was James's forays onto the Internet. As he clicked and clattered away, surrounded by their son's toy cars and Pokémon figures, he was visiting Web sites Beverly describes as "extremely inappropriate." And from the exchanges he was having with the girlfriend, it was clear to her that "there were things going on with his hands besides just typing—you'll have to read between the lines—and he would have had his back to my son's bed, so he would have had no way of knowing if the child woke up and could see the computer screen."

James didn't have any idea he was being monitored until his deposition. His attorney still can't believe it: "After her lawyer asked all the basic questions, 'Where do you work, how's your health?' blah, blah, blah, he goes, 'Are you interested in writing'" —he pauses to draw out the next word—"pornography?" My client goes, 'What?' And the lawyer pulls out a stack of papers the size of a phone book, which were conversations between him and his girlfriend, and puts them on the table and says, 'Would you look at these?' It was the shock of the century."

James, who had never heard of spyware, says he felt as if he'd been "punched in the stomach." If the raunchy printouts might have cast doubt on his future as a father figure, however, the court said: Not so fast. Spector's intelligence gathering had run up against the Florida wiretapping law, which states that intercepting a communication while it's in transit is a crime. The judge threw out Beverly's evidence because it had been collected illegally and in August 2003 awarded James custody. She appealed.

At the next hearing, the lawyers and their experts duked it out over what came down to a technological hanging chad: James's side charged that Spector intercepted his messages. Beverly's lawyer argued no, the spyware retrieved the information after it had been received and stored in the computer. In trying to rule, the court had to acknowledge that the time period in question was "evanescent." "Nobody really knew how this thing worked," James's attorney says.

Judges, however, tend to bristle at anything smacking of eavesdropping, and Beverly had clearly snooped. In February 2005,

she lost her appeal and any chance of custody. James says there were other reasons he got the kids, including the fact that she left the state before the case was over to take advantage of a job opportunity. "To be honest, had that testimony been admitted, would it have been embarrassing and damaging? Yes. Would I still have won? Yes. She let whatever activity was taking place on that computer go on," he says, denying her implications about his hands being off the keyboard. "If she was so concerned about

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at me and said,
'I will destroy you.'
I was not going
to let that happen."

the children's safety, she would have nipped it in the bud. She didn't."

Beverly is now teaching pre-K and discussing marriage with her rodeo man. She gets the kids for the summer and every other weekend. "Things just didn't go my way," she says.

ILL SAY THEY DIDN'T—THE COURT denies her evidence over a hair so fine it's "evanescent"? Suddenly, my cousin's parting words are ringing in my ears: "Before you do anything," he'd said, "talk to a lawyer—there are issues about whose computer it is and what you can do to it."

After talking to a number of lawyers, I learned that Beverly was actually lucky: Though losing custody may seem harsh, the fact is, she could have landed in jail. When I asked New York divorce attorney Ken Warner whether using a program like Spector is basically illegal, he said, "Not basically. It's illegal. It's illegal to intentionally tap into or hack into the computer account of another person that is closed and where the hacking is unauthorized or not permitted." He stopped to cite New York penal law (Section 156.10, to be exact), relevantly titled Computer Trespass. "And it's a class E felony, which is punishable by up to four years in prison." With electronic evidence increasingly making its way into divorce court, the American Bar Association saw fit earlier this year to devote an entire issue of its

journal *Family Advocate* to articles like "Spy v. Spy: Snooping by Husbands, Wives, and Lovers." Even if spousal sleuthing doesn't break wiretapping laws, simply invading someone's privacy (say, by sneaking past a password) can subject you to damages. Yet every state is different, and many cases are cutting new ground.

When Mary Lenahan had her husband's computer professionally searched six years ago, it was her attorney's idea. This was after Mary found a letter to his girlfriend in the sunroom, and she knew her 19-year marriage was beyond repair. Like Beverly, she'd been soldiering through for the kids, three boys in their teens. But when her husband made it clear he wanted a divorce and full custody, any remaining civility erupted. "I'll never forget standing in our bedroom, and he just looked at me and said, 'I will destroy you,'" recalls Mary, now 50 and a nurse liaison for a large hospital in Summit, New Jersey. "Those four words are what got me through the whole thing. I was not going to let that happen."

When her lawyer, Phyllis Klein O'Brien, suggested they see if there was any evidence on the computer that might discredit his parenting skills—the letter to his girlfriend indicated it was a good possibility—Mary agreed. "So we surreptitiously had a private investigator copy the entire hard drive," says Klein O'Brien, a partner at Donahue, Hagan, Klein, Newsome & O'Donnell. She was taking a risk. In most cases, a lawyer won't go near the other party's PC without a court order, but this was 2000, and there was no precedent in New Jersey. "I didn't know if the judge would understand the technology well enough. I was afraid he would say no."

The hard drive contained e-mails to the girlfriend, according to court records, as well as "images" he'd viewed on Netscape that Mary can only say made her "upset" (she and Klein O'Brien are barred from discussing further details). "You look at the person you married and had children with, and you feel like you don't even know him anymore." Klein O'Brien, meanwhile, was dealing with her own upset. The opposing counsel had slapped her with a motion accusing her of violating the state wiretapping statute—again, intercepting and copying messages—which she knew could put her behind bars. She'd spent hours poring over that statute—practically scrubbing it clean, she read it so many times—before suggesting Mary hire the PI and was convinced that, in this particular case, they'd done nothing illegal. "I can still picture myself at my desk, freaking, and ▶

YOU GOT NAILED!

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 377

calling in my associate, saying, 'Read this with me. Read this statute with me again,'" says Klein O'Brien. "Aren't I right? Aren't I right?"

She ultimately convinced the judge that she was. The key was that Mary's husband had inadvertently set up his AOL account to save e-mails to the hard drive (normally AOL saves everything to its own server), which meant that there was no interception or illegal access in retrieving them. Furthermore, because the computer was one the whole family used and the e-mails were not password protected, there was no privacy invasion. The couple ended up settling and agreeing to joint custody, with a larger chunk of time going to Mary. Klein O'Brien could finally breathe. "I didn't know any of this before," she says. "I was scared to death."

A HALF-HOUR DRIVE OUT OF JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA, is a spanking new development of houses, some not yet sold, with driveways laid out neat as pleats along a circular drive—the kind of place that offers good golf and barbecue. I've come to meet the Mintz Group's computer forensics expert, curious to see what a real pro can do with a hard drive. John McElhatton and his wife, Tina, a newly retired teacher, bought here a year ago to have somewhere to vacation. His base in Virginia, just outside Washington, D.C., is where he does all his digital dissections, but he's got enough equipment here to show me a few things.

After 26 years in the FBI, McElhatton, dressed in easy-fit jeans and leather moccasins, has definitely got the art of the background-blend down. He helped start the FBI's computer forensics unit with another agent in the early nineties. In the beginning, it was just the two of them; now the department numbers almost 300. "Initially, we were doing financial crimes, a lot of healthcare fraud," he says, admitting they were working by the seat of their pants, developing their own techniques as they went along. Things heated up when Aldrich Ames, a CIA counterintelligence officer, went down as a Russian spy, thanks in large part to what McElhatton's team pulled from the entrails of his computer. ("It's classified," he says, when I pump him for details.) His technological chops helped solve other cases—murders, kidnappings—but in the mid-nineties, he says, something else started washing up in the flotsam of retrieved bits and bytes: child porn. Pedophilia was nothing new, obviously, but computer forensics opened a larger keyhole, through which many in the field say they've seen too much. "Imagine going in every day and working that stuff. You have kids...," he trails off, perhaps thinking of his three. "I wouldn't say that was the reason I retired, but it was one of them for sure."

As a free agent, he started his own business in 1997 and for the past four years has been working with my cousin. McElhatton invites me into his airy den. All that time spent on the dark side of human nature may account for the bright Butter Up yellow of the walls. I can see he's got more than the average home PC: His computer is custom-made, with five hard drives and a couple of keyboards, although they slide and stow in a pretty ordinary way. A portable PC built into a hard black carrying case is much more 007—he can sneak off in the middle of the night, hook it up jumper-cable style to a suspect's computer, then "suck the data right out to a drive that's on this one."

McElhatton, booting up his system now, is talking about making a "mirror image," which is an exact replica of a hard drive (if it were yours, you'd have no idea you weren't on your own computer—think: clone). Computer forensics experts typically do their investigations on such a copy, running sophisticated utilities that

open-sesame through passwords and revive data from the dead and deleted. Like Raquel Welch in that old movie *Fantastic Voyage*, where she gets micro-sized and travels inside a human body, McElhatton enters each re-created computer and follows a stranger's logic along arteries of circuitry, searching for clusters of bad behavior.

"So what are we looking at here?" I ask. On his screen, I see a MapQuest for directions to a street called River Road (he clicks the mouse), then a flight reservation (click), rental car. He explains that we're on the computer of a real estate agent who was soliciting potential sellers for himself, not the company he worked for, going to see people he wasn't supposed to be meeting with. McElhatton clicks over to Google and pulls up a long history of search terms the man had entered: "Escorts." "Virgin Islands." "Cyndi." "Trish." "Jessica." (I had to promise to change the names.)

"Right. So—yeah," he says, "it's very interesting what people are searching for." He remembers an FBI case where a woman OD'd on pills and left a suicide note. When they investigated her husband's computer to see if he'd typed the note himself (he'd recently taken out an enormous insurance policy on her), they didn't find one, but they did ferret out searches he'd done for undetectable poisons. He confessed to killing her.

McElhatton moves on to deleted files. Easy game. They don't actually get erased, he explains, just overwritten when the computer runs out of space. But with PCs now powered by 60, 80, even 100 gigabytes, this often doesn't happen. "A ten-gigabyte hard drive—which is nothing today—holds the equivalent of about 15,000 paperback books," says McElhatton.

E-mail may or may not be salvageable, I learn. Suffice it to say, whatever you write on corporate e-mail goes down in history. AOL, on the other hand, "is problematic for the forensic examiner," says McElhatton, because it automatically saves everything to its own server (unless, like Mary's husband, you choose to save it onto your computer); Yahoo! and Hotmail are easier to dredge up. But all e-mails have a chance of landing in something called residual space.

"Residual space is some of the most fertile ground for computer forensics because people don't know about it, have no access to it, and have no control over it," says McElhatton. Say you type a letter (and I'm brutally simplifying here): Often that doesn't fill the space allotted for the file you've created. The computer, efficient as it is, goes, "Oh joy, here's a dresser drawer

that has a little extra room," and stuffs in random data that's hanging around—deleted e-mails, photos, scanned documents, and, who knows, maybe a smoking gun.

McElhatton says it's even possible to recover information that's been deliberately eliminated. One time the Mintz Group was called in by a firm that suspected an employee of stealing proprietary data—they thought he might be planning to start his own business. The man, however, got wind that they were onto him and quickly had his company laptop completely reformatted. "This guy thought he was pretty smart," says McElhatton, "but we got the equivalent of maybe 20 printed pages' worth of documents and e-mails he'd written."

Later when I ask my cousin about the

"I go downstairs
to the computer.
The wood floors
are creaking;
my cat is meowing.
I'm whispering,
'No, no, Manny;
be quiet.'"

case, he says, "I remember it. The e-mails, unfortunately, weren't damning as much as suggestive. But the employee had a nickname for the guy he was corresponding with. He called him Q-ball." When Jim went to interview the suspect, he brought along the stack of printouts. Peeling the first page off the top, he held it up and said, "I know all about you and Q-ball."

My cousin laughs. "The guy looks at this pile of paper and thinks we've got everything he'd done on his computer. He rolls over."

Before I leave Florida, McElhatton tells me about one other nifty way to trace electronic fingerprints: metadata, technically data about data, like the time and date a document is modified, the program that creates a file. It sounds so mundane, but, he says, metadata is what finally cracked the case of the sadist BTK ("bind, torture, kill"), who played cat and mouse with the Wichita police for 30 years while he murdered at least ten victims. "Check it out," McElhatton says.

ON FEBRUARY 16, 2005, IN A cramped Kansas cubicle, Detective Randy Stone was nervously staring at his laptop—that's how he remembers it when I call him to follow up on this BTK thing. The message on the screen simply read "This is a test." It was BTK's 11th communiqué and had arrived on a floppy disk, along with a victim's necklace and some printed material. Stone, who's with the forensic computer crime unit of the Wichita police, was skeptical he'd find any clues on the disk. Nevertheless, when he started his meticulous probing of metadata, "Christ Lutheran Church" came up (the message had been created on a version of Office registered to the church) and—Stone couldn't believe his luck—"Dennis," the name used to log on to the computer where the document was last saved. Stone Googled the Christ Lutheran Church in Wichita, clicked a link on its Web site, and right at the top of the next page he saw it: Dennis Rader. He was president of the congregation.

"I'm sitting there looking at his name on the monitor with a crowd of people behind me. I turn around and poof, everybody's gone, just running in different directions," Stone recalls. Nine days later, on February 25, 2005, BTK was arrested.

That was a great moment for computer forensics, but Stone fears the rapid advance of technology is conjuring up crimes so new, the legal system is at a loss when it comes to prosecuting them. "Husband and wife get a divorce," he starts, describing a real domestic case. "He moves to Wyoming, goes online, and puts an ad on an adult sex site. In this ad, he claims to be the ex-wife. Says, Here's who I am, here's my phone number, here's where I live, where I work, what I drive, here's my picture, and my fantasy is to be stalked and raped."

"A local guy in Wichita answers, thinking he's corresponding with a woman. The ex-husband says, 'Yeah, this is my biggest fantasy, ha-ha. If you do it, I will pretend to resist because it just enhances the excitement.' He says, 'On Wednesdays I leave the sliding glass door unlocked for my son.' So the dude shows up, goes in through the sliding glass door, rummages around in her drawer and steals some underwear, lays a rose on her bed, and leaves." After he sent her a dozen roses at work the next day, the woman talked the local flower shop into divulging his name and phone number, arranged a meeting, and brought the police. But what is his crime? Stone asks. "In his mind, he does not have the criminal intent to commit a rape—he's just continuing a ▶

mutually consensual fantasy. So how do you charge him? And what do you charge the ex-husband in Wyoming with? You could actually engineer a situation where something happens to your ex and you are not liable even though you set all the wheels in motion for harm to occur. We've had several cases like that."

I ask Stone if he's come across a lot of cheating spouses in his extensive gigabyte travels. He tells me about a woman who, in his opinion, found something worse.

MARCH 10, 2004, WAS LENT. John Coleman had fallen asleep upstairs in his suburban home outside Wichita when his wife came in from church and first heard about the pictures. Married for ten months, Pam and John had met on a blind date about four years before they wed—he, a police officer, she, an accountant at the local air force base, both the type of people who see things in black-and-white, right or wrong, according to Pam, now 43. This was the second time around for each, and between them, they were raising five kids. "He was a huge family man," she says.

Pam was in the kitchen when her teenage

stepson told her there were pictures on his dad's computer she should see, and he'd save them on a floppy disk for her to look at later. She had noticed a change in John since they'd all moved into that house together. Before, he thought nothing of whipping up dinner or mowing the lawn. But lately he'd lost interest in helping out. "I'd come home, and he'd be on the computer down in the basement where the family room was," says Pam. "I could tell he'd just run up the stairs when he heard me in the garage." She'd ask about dinner. "He'd say, 'Well, I didn't know what you wanted me to fix.' The point is, I'm not picky. It was like he was engrossed in something else."

When Pam got a free moment, she opened the floppy and saw the child. "It was like running into a brick wall," she says. A girl. Naked and sexually posed.

Pam's own two children, now also John's stepchildren, ages 8 and 12, were girls.

She started going through some of the other disks in the filing cabinet next to his desk, and found they all contained similar photos of little girls. Wondering if downloading such pictures was even legal, she called a friend who worked for an attorney. It was Friday and the friend said she might not be able to find out that day. Over the

weekend, John seemed like his old self, talking about doing projects around the house because spring was coming, says Pam. "Now, this," she thought, "is the person I fell in love with and married." She didn't mention the disks.

Back at work on Monday, she got a call around noon. It was her friend's boss on the line saying the DA had already been notified. "He tells me, 'You're right, it is illegal. And John knows it's illegal. Things are going to start happening.' And I no more than hung up the phone than it rang." This time it was an officer from the Wichita Police Department's Exploited and Missing Child Unit (EMCU), who wanted her to come down to the station to make a statement. On the basis of her interview, without seeing the pictures, two detectives drove off to arrest John at the nearby Park City Police Department, where he worked, while three others went to the house to seize his computer and floppy disks. After Pam met them back home, during all the commotion the phone rang. "One of the detectives said, 'It's probably him. Don't answer it.' And it was," says Pam. "His message was something to the effect of, 'Didn't know if you'd answer the phone or not.' Pause. 'I'll talk to you later. I love you.'" She broke down in tears.

John's computer ended up in the hands of Randy Stone. Part of his job was to confirm that Pam hadn't planted the porn, always a concern in a case like this, particularly since John was a cop. Through the metadata, Stone could show that the pictures were loaded on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, when John had his days off and Pam was at work.

The detectives had to talk to Pam's daughters as well. When the eldest told them that one night she'd woken up and John had his hand under her shirt—she turned over and he went away—Pam went into a tailspin. "Because now I'm questioning myself. What did I do to my kids, what did I get them into? How come I didn't know?" By that time, she'd already begun filing for divorce.

"I saw a horrific side of my husband that I never knew existed," she wrote in a statement she prepared for the court. "I never expected John, as a person, but especially as an officer of the law, to unashamedly violate the laws he was employed to enforce."

On December 3, 2004, John Coleman was sentenced to 32 months in jail for sexual exploitation of a child (the charge related to fondling his stepdaughter was ultimately dropped). "There were about 1,000 photos—explicit sex acts involving children and men wearing leather masks," says Assistant District Attorney Marc Bennett. "The stack was about four or five inches high. The judge was appalled." Pam, who hasn't talked to John since the day of his arrest, remembers his final comments. "He said, 'I'm sorry to all my friends and family and the communities that have been involved in this. I was wrong. And I lost a lot, too. Lost my job, my career.' Almost the very last thing he said was, 'I lost my best friend, my wife.'"

Pam has used her anger to move on, although she's working against an undertow—her love for him, her loyalty. "Why," she asks, as if she's speaking to him, "didn't you say something so you could get help?" Then to me, "But I'm mad."

SUZANNE BAUGHAN, THE WIFE of another cop, is also mad. For most of her decadelong marriage, the 32-year-old was white-knuckling the suburban dream so hard she neglected to pay attention to the rumors that her husband, Wade, had a mistress. Or to the threats she says he started making over the past couple of years, telling her "he would break my face or kill me if I didn't do what he wanted." Aside from his being very controlling, she says "the worst thing was forced sex." A lot was at stake. The Baughans had a nice house—a traditional colonial in Haymarket, Virginia, outside Washington,

D.C.—the yard, the dog, and a side business in residential real estate, which allowed Suzanne to stay at home with their 6-year-old son, Mason, whom she hoped would soon have a sibling. "I never wanted to be labeled as divorced. I guess I'm very prudish and old-fashioned," she says, "and I was in love with him." But in the earliest days of 2006, as people everywhere dragged their Christmas trees to the curbs, something shifted.

Suzanne could not ignore the January cell phone bill. One number was all over it, including a call after midnight on New Year's Eve, just around the time Wade said he was going to get something out of the car (neither Wade nor his lawyer returned O's calls). He'd quit his job in November as a police officer and was now working part-time as a Prince William County sheriff's deputy so he could spend more time pursuing real estate deals. When one of Suzanne's girlfriends suggested phonebust.com (you give them the number, even if it's unpublished, and for a fee, they tell you whose it is), she discovered that the one decorating her phone bill belonged to a female police officer Wade used to work with, the woman the rumors had been about.

By this time, it was February. He was barely home anymore, she says, often coming in late, hopping on the computer, and then hitting the sack. One night after they'd gone to sleep, Suzanne very carefully slipped out of bed. She'd just come home from the hospital after having back surgery. "I'm barely able to walk and I have to go downstairs," she says, remembering how she rued her dislike of carpet that had left the steps bare. "The wood floors are creaking; my cat is meowing. I'm whispering, 'No, no, Manny; be quiet.'" The office was directly below the bedroom. When she finally managed to sneak in, she saw not only that the computer was going but that Wade was still logged on. "He was so convinced I was an airhead, he believed he could get away with anything," she says. A former teacher with a master's in special education, Suzanne deftly went to "history" and clicked on one of the Web sites he'd just been visiting, and the tidy future she'd planned for herself imploded.

"It was a picture of him and his mistress. He's sitting on a couch—I don't know what couch. And he has his shirt off. And she's on top of him, just in underwear, straddling him. And he's about to kiss her bosom." The Web site hooks people up for group sex. According to the member profile that went with the photo, they are a fun couple—straight (him), bicurious (her), and married to each other—looking for other women preferably above 5'8" (Suzanne is 5'6½"). ▶

"My heart sank," she says. "No words can explain how I felt. I mean, it was hard enough knowing that he was unfaithful and betrayed me. But this is really risky behavior. He was putting my life on the line here. And he obviously didn't care."

She hit print. *Print. Print. Print.* Over the next month, she made several more furtive missions, often at night because that's when he'd just been on the computer and she could surf in his wake without passwords. As the pages slid out of the printer, she'd shove them under a rug until she could hide them in a box of baby clothes. Meanwhile, she tried to fend off his sexual advances—if putting up with them was hard before, now it was dangerous. One of the first things she did was get an AIDS test, and then she used her back surgery as an excuse. The few times he did insist they have sex, she says, "I told him I would do something to him, versus him touching me. And that worked."

After a couple of weeks, she stepped up her investigation into a full commando surveillance operation. He never let her have access to his Range Rover, she says, but she picked it up from the shop one day before he could get there and got the key copied; at the same time, she installed a hidden GPS device (she'd hired a PI to tail him, but her husband's driving style—"he's a police officer and pretty much goes 80 in a 25-mile-an-hour zone"—made him impossible to follow without blowing one's cover). Checking inside the car—"straws with lipstick, extra clothes, extra underwear," Suzanne sighs—became part of her nocturnal rounds.

The cell phone was another data mine. When Wade asked her to mail back his old one because he'd been sent an updated model, she said sure. "But I kept it." The problem was it had no battery, and when she went to the mobile company, they wouldn't give her a new one; they would ship it only to her husband's address because he'd bought the phone. Twice she had to shoo the UPS man away when Wade was home; on the third delivery try, however, she got the battery and popped it in. There were all sorts of numbers that she believes were his sex buddies—"names he'd put 'F***' by." Suzanne also found his calendar on the phone, going two years back. "Each time he would have sex with his mistress," she says, "it was marked down."

As unhinged as she was by discovering the kinky, sordid details of his organized deceit, Suzanne's undercover work turned up something else: evidence suggesting that Wade was forging documents for a big commercial real estate deal he was hoping to close. By the time she went to the police—

the same department he'd worked for—they were already investigating the matter. On March 9, detectives swarmed the Baughans' house, taking his computer, among other things. "I told Wade we were officially separated and he'd just lost the best thing that had ever happened to him. And I told him I knew about the affair," says Suzanne, "which he denied."

Since then, Gene Wade Baughan has been charged with 12 felony counts that include forgery and attempting to obtain money under false pretenses; his trial is set

Checking the car— "straws with lipstick, underwear"—became part of her nocturnal rounds.

for October. And Suzanne, to her surprise, is looking forward to being divorced. After years of worrying about what he's up to, or what he might do to her, she says, "there's just been a big peace."

THE VERDICT IS IN: YOU CAN run (around), that's for sure, but you cannot hide. Yet I'm still struggling with a question or two. I'm struck by these women, with their intrepid ingenuity, their high-techery and derring-do—and at the same time, it's a little unsettling to be reminded that just about every naughty impulse has become a searchable, readable, printable part of the record. It's another example of how public our lives have grown as we keep losing personal details to the whoosh of the information highway, leaving us baldly exposed.

Legal issues—clearly considerable—aside, I wonder if, given a good reason, I would load up the spyware. Where do you draw the line between your right to know what he's up to and his right to privacy? I make a quick call to Randy Cohen, whose ethics column I read every week in *The New York Times Magazine*. I can feel his neck hairs bristle over the phone—no fan of intimate espionage here. "But," he reasons, "if there is real evidence I've been catting around and you've tried more than once to say, 'Look, we really have to talk about this,' and I've refused to be honest with you, then I think you're permitted to take more extreme measures."

Just one more call. "So what are you asking me?" *O's* life coach columnist, Martha Beck, tries to clarify at the other end of the line. I've rung her up for—she's right, for what? Maybe reassurance? I replay Cohen's scenario. Beck has known a few neurotics in her time. Couldn't all this computer peeping exacerbate an overly suspicious nature, even become addictive, I pose? "If you're obsessed with spying on your spouse, that's not love," she says. "That's you trying to control another person so that you won't get your feelings hurt, ever ever ever. And it creates exactly what you fear." Generally, however, Beck gives a hearty thumbs-up to following your hunch: "When someone lies, the body reacts violently, and the other person picks it up," she says. "So if he's lying to you and it keeps insisting nothing's wrong—and it is—you inevitably end up thinking, *I'm crazy*. And that feeling is even worse than knowing that someone is cheating on you." Reality, harsh as it is, offers relief.

In the end, truth simply trumps. And Suzanne Baughan is thanking the technology goddesses for leading her to it. "To be looking at this stuff and think this man is my husband," she says, "is unbelievable. There must be a lot of women out there who know something's going on but are too scared to do anything about it. I was one of them.

"I could still be in the dark." ●