

and requested that Cutler put her in charge of administering the counsel's office. (Cutler declined to do so.) Willey then discovered that Tripp had been telling others in the office that she was "useless." She broke off the friendship, according to another friend, and stopped taking Tripp's phone calls. In August, 1994, reportedly without so much as a job interview, Tripp moved to a public-affairs job in the Pentagon that paid twenty thousand dollars more than her job at the White House. Some in the White House say that by then she was regarded with suspicion, but she received consistently outstanding performance evaluations there, and this has been true at the Pentagon as well. It was at the Pentagon, in the spring of 1996, that Tripp met Monica Lewinsky, a former White House intern half her age. Lewinsky, too, had been exiled to the Pentagon, and by the summer of 1996 she had begun to confide in Tripp.

IN January, 1997, an anonymous source told one of Paula Jones's lawyers about the Willey incident. The Jones team, in turn, tipped *Newsweek* reporter Michael Isikoff. By March, he was talking to Tripp about the incident. Eventually, Tripp confirmed the story, adding a detail embarrassing to Willey: that Kathleen had been flattered rather than distressed by the President's attention. The *Newsweek* story ran in August, 1997, and included an angry denial from the President's lawyer Robert Bennett, who declared that "Linda Tripp is not to be believed." According to Lucianne Goldberg, Tripp was insulted by the remark and afraid that she would be entangled in the Clintons' legal problems. That, Goldberg claims, is why Tripp began to tape her new friend Monica: to get "proof" of Clinton's misbehavior. But there is evidence that she had been thinking for quite some time about exposing what she considered misdeeds at the White House.

As early as the summer of 1996, Tripp had moved closer to accusing Clinton publicly. It was then, the syndicated columnist Maggie Gallagher told me, that Lucianne Goldberg approached her about ghostwriting a tell-all White House memoir for Tripp. The book would cover many topics, and include a chapter called "The Pres-

ident's memoir," about the President's alleged philandering, Gallagher recalled. The project was expected to be "very big" financially. There was a sense of urgency about getting the book done, Gallagher says, presumably so that it would come out before the 1996 election.

Gallagher and Tripp met for the first and only time at a restaurant in New Jersey on August 6th. Tripp had been with her mother earlier in the day, and struck Gallagher as a dutiful daughter and "a good girl." The two women talked easily about sex and the White House, though Tripp was concerned about appearing too tawdry in print. It was clear to Gallagher that Tripp was torn about the project. "She had all of these conflicts," Gallagher says. "It's the lying that really bothered her," she adds, apparently referring to White House statements about various investigations. "She wanted to be loyal, but she also wanted to get her story out." Six weeks into this second book project, Tripp lost her nerve. She told Gallagher that she had received a raise and had two college-age children to support. Gallagher's sense, though, was that "it might take time, but in the end staying silent was going to be too hard." This, then, was the frame of mind in which Linda Tripp played confessor to Monica Lewinsky.

A year after walking away from the Gallagher collaboration, in August of 1997, Tripp again phoned Lucianne Goldberg. She wanted advice on how to handle *Newsweek*, which she said had been pursuing her ever since she spoke on the record about Kathleen Willey. She could refuse to say anything more, but she was tempted to talk, because she had some new information.

"It sounds like you're on the Bimbo Beat," Goldberg recalls saying.

"That's why I'm afraid," Tripp replied nervously. "Can you help me? He's got a girlfriend."

Over the next few weeks, Tripp spoke to Goldberg numerous times about her conversations with Monica, and the possibility that the President was sexually involved with her. One of these conversations took place at Jonah Goldberg's Washington apartment, and he recalls that Tripp seemed especially upset that Monica was only slightly older than Chelsea Clinton. Linda Tripp, in other words, viewed the President through the eyes of a daughter. ♦

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