

THE ERINYES



“This is a list of our demands.”

Dean Herb Shriley tried to catch the piece of paper shoved across his desk, but it curled up at one side and flew into the air. He clapped it with both hands the way one might kill a mosquito and grimaced at the now crumpled paper. He tried to sound matter-of-fact as he said to the students, “Student input is always welcome on faculty searches. Generally each department invites students to come to a lecture of the visiting candidate—”

“That’s too late in the process for our input!” one of the three young women shouted in a clearly rehearsed monotone, raising both her hands to her ears to deny his words passage. Her head was shaved and she wore an elaborate belt that circled her waist over and over like a writhing serpent. The Erinyes, Herb thought, those punishing mythic women had infiltrated his office. He would have to scold his secretary, Mrs. Tribble, for letting them in.

“Read our demands,” said the one whose eyebrow, nose and lip flashed with silver earrings, “and you’ll see that we want to make sure that you bring the *right* people to campus to interview.”

Herb laid the paper flat on the desk and attempted to smooth it out. “Well, the History department will consult with me about bringing in the most qualified candidates in the field of British history—”

“Qualified doesn’t cut it,” the bald one said, karate chopping the edge of his desk to make her point. “The department needs a woman of color from a developing nation. Imperialist British history has been taught for far too long. We *must* hire someone who can address the history of the colonized, who can assess the impact of the classist, racist Empire on oppressed peoples.”

Herb guessed she was the leader of the trio. She had the motivating forthrightness of a general giving orders to troops. While she spoke, the woman with the piercings raised a fisted hand over her head while the third,