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Spotted-streaked-splashed, with false tears on her cheeks, with a darkly glimmering crown of rain jewels in her hair, she raced up the steps as though she were a princess abandoned by her coachman, and allowed herself to be scooped into her grandmother's arms..Apparently, he'd been drooling for a long time. Where his chin and throat were not sticky, a crust of dried saliva glazed his skin..The strange barrage of lightning, putting an end to the rain rather than initiating it, had been a clue. The rapid clearing of the sky-indicating a stiff wind at high altitudes, while stillness prevailed at ground level-a sudden plunge in the humidity, and an unseasonable warmth confirmed the coming catastrophe..by the ferocity of the beating and by years of fear and humiliation. So he opens his mouth, just to end it, just to be.And the mills of capitalism provide them. Supply meets demand. Fantasy becomes a commodity, an industry..At first, he couldn't gather the nerve to return to the kitchen. He was crazily certain that in his absence, the dead detective would have risen and would be waiting for him..The night was in flight, however, and he had a lot to do before it swooped straight into morning..**"No,"** Agnes said, shaking loose the grip of irrational fear. **"Wait. This is absurd. It's just a card. And we're all curious."**The bitch was getting tired, but Junior still didn't like his odds in a hand-to-hand confrontation. Her hair was disarranged. Her eyes flashed with such wildness that he was half convinced he saw elliptical pupils like those of a jungle cat. Her lips were skinned back from her teeth in a snarl..Barty whispered: **"The North Pole Society of Not Evil Adventurers is now in session."**Prosser-fifty-six, a widower, an accountant-had a thirty-year-old daughter, Zelda, who was an attorney in San Francisco. Junior had driven to Terra Linda previously, to research the accountant; he already knew Prosser had no connection to Seraphim's fateful child..**"Maybe."** In truth, Tom didn't believe that any of this could be learned even by one adept taking instruction from another adept. They were born with the same special perception, but with different and strictly limited abilities to interact with the multiplicity of worlds that they could detect. He wasn't able to explain even to himself how he could send a coin or other small object Elsewhere; it was something he just felt, and each time that the coin vanished, the authenticity of the feeling was proved. He suspected that when Barty walked where the rain wasn't, the boy employed no conscious techniques; he simply decided to walk in a dry world while otherwise remaining in this wet one-and then he did. Woefully incomplete wizards, sorcerers with just a trick or two each, they had no secret tome of enchantments and spells to teach to an apprentice..Gazing into the mirror, which ought to have been clouded with self-pity as though with steam, Junior Cain searched for his anger and found it. This was a black and bitter anger, as poisonous as rattlesnake venom; with little difficulty, his heart was distilling it into purest rage..The reverend said, **"I'm sure you underestimate my parishioners, Celestina. They won't be scandalized. They'll open their hearts."**Being ruthlessly honest with himself, as always, he acknowledged that killing Tammy would not solve his problem. She might have told friends and colleagues about the Rolex, just as she had surely shared with her girlfriends the juiciest details about Junior's unequalled lovemaking. During the two months that he and the cat woman dated, others had heard her call him Eenie. He couldn't kill Tammy and all her friends and colleagues, at least not on a timely enough schedule to thwart the police..Hound was sorry for him. **"You know, if it was Gelluk questioning you, he'd have everything you know out of you just with a word or two, and your wits with it. I've seen what old Whiteface leaves behind when he asks questions. Listen, can you work with the wind at all?"**.Vanadium hadn't seen the man who had clubbed him from behind and who had smashed his face with a pewter candlestick, but when~ he spoke the name Enoch Cain, the quality in his eyes was not compassion. No fingerprints had been left, no evidence in the aftermath of the fire at the Bressler house or in the Studebaker hauled from Quarry Lake..Eventually, he settled on a mental image of a bowling pin as his "seed." This was a smooth, elegantly shaped object that invited languorous contemplation, but it did not tease his libido..than the crows. Tumbled on the grass, in fragments: the broken trophy for the prize rose, the symbol of his sinful.Once he had toured the exhibition, managing not to shudder openly, he tried to hang out within hearing distance of Celestina White, but without appearing to be listening with special intensity..**"I don't stumble. Not much, anyway."** To the girl, Bartholomew said, **"Angel, are you okay?"**.Deed flinched. **"No reason. But I sure never did mean you or your husband any harm, Mrs. Lampion. And not your baby, either, not little Bartholomew."**That was another thing. Junior hadn't gotten his noon meal, because the spirit of Vanadium had nearly caught up with him when he'd been browsing for tie chains and silk pocket squares before lunch. Then he missed dinner, as well, because he had to maintain surveillance on Celestina when she didn't go straight home from the gallery. He was hungry. He was starving. This, too, she had done to him. The bitch..When the convulsive seizure passed, as he collapsed back on the spattered pillow, shuddering at the stench rising from his hideously fouled clothes, Junior was suddenly struck by an idea that was either..She could have gone at him with the chair once more, but it was falling apart. Instead, she abandoned furniture for the promise of a firearm, dropped to her knees, and snatched the discarded pistol magazine off the floor..Charmed by the vulnerability of the young, he'd never slept with an older woman. The prospect intrigued him. She would have tricks in her repertoire that younger women were too inexperienced to know..Finished, Joshua excused himself and went down the hall to his office. He was gone perhaps five minutes, and when he returned, he sent Barty off to the waiting room, where the receptionist kept a jar of lemon- and orange-flavored hard candies. **"A few of them have your name on 'em, Bartholomew."**But when the lore-books of a wizard came into a warlord's hands he was likely to treat them with caution, locking them away to keep them harmless or giving them to a wizard in his hire to do with as he wished. In the margins of the spells and word lists and in the endpapers of these books of lore a wizard or his prentice might record a plague, a famine, a raid, a change of masters, along with the spells worked in such events and their success or unsuccess. Such random records reveal a clear moment here and there, though all between those moments is darkness. They are like glimpses of a lighted ship far out at

sea, in darkness, in the rain..murdered would be discounted. And if every death was suspicious to him, then he would quickly lose interest in Junior and move on to a new enthusiasm, harassing some other poor devil..An exceptionally attractive woman, alone at the bar, stirred his desire. Glossy black hair: the tresses of night itself, shorn from the sky.Evidently, the hero was accustomed to encounters of this nature. He rose, pulled out the unused fourth chair. "Please sit with us.".When Junior opened the trunk, he discovered that fishing gear and two wooden carriers full of carpenter's tools left no room for a dead detective. He would be able to make the body fit only if he dismembered it first..At home, Agnes had no appetite, but she fixed Barty a cheese sandwich, spooned potato salad into a dish, added a bag of corn chips and a Coke, and served this late dinner on a tray, in his room, where he was already in bed and reading Tunnel in the Sky..Two staff members were at the front desk, when last he'd seen them, out of sight now and too far away to hear the crooning. Junior had been waiting at the doors when the library opened, and thus far he'd encountered no other patrons..In the morning, at breakfast, from this calmer perspective, he looked back at his tantrum in the middle of the night and wondered if he might be in psychological trouble. He decided not. In November and December, Junior studied arcane texts on the supernatural, went through new women at a pace prodigious even for him, found three Bartholomews, and finished ten needlepoint pillows..Junior Cain felt as if his heart had been lanced by a needle so thin that the muscle still contracted rhythmically but painfully around it. She did? She. . . she wrote that?".After much oily commiseration, sanctimonious babble about Naomi having gone to a better place, and insincere talk of the government's desire always to ensure the public safety and to treat every citizen with compassion, Knacker or Hisscus, or Nork, finally got around to the issue of compensation..After too many years investigating homicides, after too much experience of human evil, perhaps he had grown both misanthropic and paranoid..Throughout the evening, Barty and Angel-sitting side by side and across the table from Paul-listened to the adults at times and occasionally joined in the larger conversation, but primarily they talked between themselves. When the kids' heads weren't together conspiratorially, Paul could hear their chatter, and depending on what else was being discussed around the table, he sometimes tuned in to it. He picked up on the word rhinoceros, tuned in, tuned out, but a couple minutes later, he dialed back in when he realized that Celestina, sitting two places farther along the table from him, had risen from her chair and was staring in amazement at the kids..In spite of his dumpy appearance-and especially in the dark, where appearances didn't count-Vanadium had the aura of a mystic. Although Junior didn't believe in mystics or in the various unearthly powers they claimed to possess, he knew that mystics who believed in themselves were exceptionally dangerous people.. "But nothing equals a quake for killing. Big one in Shaanxi, China, killed eight hundred thirty thousand.". "Shape-taking?". Junior kept both forged driver's licenses in his wallet, in addition to the one that featured his real name. He stowed everything else in Pinchbeck's and Gammoner's safe-deposit boxes, along with the emergency cash..For guidance, Agnes couldn't rely entirely on any of the child rearing books in her library. Barty's unique gifts presented her with special parenting problems. Now, when he asked if he could stay up even later, to read about John Thomas Stuart and LummoX, John's pet from another world, she granted him permission.. "I really am sorry about this," Junior said, regretting the necessity to deny her the right to look good at her own funeral, "but it's got to appear to be a crime of passion.". "What's below us?" Hound pointed to the floor, paved with rough slate flags..We cherish the old stories for their changelessness. Arthur dreams eternally in Avalon. Bilbo can go "there and back again," and "there" is always the beloved familiar Shire. Don Quixote sets out forever to kill a windmill... So people turn to the realms of fantasy for stability, ancient truths, immutable simplicities..They had a few days for quiet celebration of this astonishing recovery of his sight, and in that time, she never tired of watching him read to her. He didn't think she even listened closely. It was the fact of him made whole that lifted her spirits so high as they were now, not any writer's words nor any story ever written..From the bathroom, Junior gathered an electric razor and toiletries. He added these to the suitcases..Using this apartment as a base, Nolly and Kathleen had conducted some of the small skirmishes in the first phase of the war, including the ghost serenades. They left the place tidy. Indeed, the only sign that they had ever been here was a packet of dental floss left behind on the sill of a living-room window.. "Maria is coming by with Francesca and Bonita," Agnes said. "We might as well put all the extensions in the table. Barty, call Uncle Jacob and Uncle Edom and invite them for dinner.". "Angel," Phimie said thickly, searching her sister's eyes for a sign of understanding..Although the only light on the back porch came from the pale beams that filtered out through the curtains on the kitchen windows, all these faces seemed luminous, almost preternaturally aglow, like the kiln-fired countenances of saints in a dark church, lit solely by the flames of votive candies. The rain-a music of sorts, and the jasmine and incense, and the moment sacred.. "My little girl," she said, and belatedly she realized that this might not be a policeman, after all, but someone trying to determine if she and Angel were alone in the apartment..She nodded. And could not lift her gaze from her hands. Could not meet his eyes, afraid that his worry would feed her own, afraid also that the sight of his sympathy would shake loose her perilous grip on her emotions.. "He's a wonderful boy, so very bright, so very full of life. Blindness will be hard, but it won't be the end. He'll cope without the light. It'll be so difficult at first, but this boy ... eventually he'll thrive.". By ones and twos, the festive crowd eventually deconstructed, but for Celestina, an excitement lingered in the usual gallery hush that rebuilt in their wake..would allow herself to feel the loss, the misery against which she was now armored. Phimie deserved dignity in this final. In southern California, Agnes Lampion dreams of her newborn son. In Oregon, Junior Cain fearfully speaks a name in his sleep, and Detective Vanadium, waiting to tell the suspect about his dead wife's diary, leans forward in his chair to listen, while ceaselessly- turning a quarter across the thick knuckles of his right hand..He'd been a godsend to Celestina, because his love of children and a new sense of fun that he'd discovered in himself were showered on Angel. He was Uncle Wally. Waddling Wally, Wobbly Wally, Wally Walrus, Wally Werewolf. Wally Wit Duh Funny Accents. Wiggle Eared Wally. Whistling Wally. Wrangler Wally. He was Good Golly Wally the Friend of All Polliwogs. Angel adored him, adored him, and he could have loved her no more if she had been one of the sons that he had lost. Overwhelmed by her classes, her waitressing job, her painting, Celestina could always count on Wally to step in to share the child rearing. He wasn't merely Angel's honorary uncle, but her father in all senses except the legal and biological; he wasn't just her doctor, but a guardian angel who fretted over her mildest fever and worried about all the ways the world could wound a child..So much argued against the idea that they could succeed as a couple. In this age when race supposedly didn't matter anymore, it sometimes seemed to matter more year by year. Age mattered, too, and at fifty, he was twenty-six years older than she was, old enough to be her father, as surely her father would quietly but pointedly--and repeatedly!-observe. He was highly educated, with multiple medical degrees, and she had gone to art school..The same thought had occurred to her, a consolation that might make acceptance of these riches possible. Yet she remained chilled by the thought of receiving a life-changing amount of money as the consequence

of a death..He was immensely weary, limp. He felt oppressed, as though a great weight were piled on him. Even keeping his eyes open was tiring.. "By the close of business tomorrow," said the lawyer, "I expect to have an offer for your consideration..". "Can't change your own form, even seemingly?". Tossing the knave onto the table, Agnes said, "Barty doesn't seem too impressed with this devil..". Junior was motivated not by twisted needs, but by rational self interest. Consequently, he opted to load the detective's body into the cramped backseat of the Studebaker with all limbs intact and head attached.. This claim wasn't true. His father, an unsuccessful artist and highly successful alcoholic, lived in Santa Monica, California. His mother, divorced when Junior was four, had been committed to an insane asylum twelve years ago. He rarely saw them. He hadn't told Naomi about them. Neither of his parents was a resume enhancer.. Arriving home, he hesitated to open the door. He expected to find Vanadium inside.. During the rest of that first year, he walked to Palm Springs and back, a round trip of more than two hundred miles, and north to Santa Barbara.. Taking her silence for assent, Tom continued: "Your father is gone from here, gone forever, but he still lives in other worlds. This isn't a statement of faith alone. If Albert Einstein were still alive and standing here, he'd tell you that it's true. Your father is with you in many places, and so is Phimie. In many places, she didn't die in childbirth. In some worlds, she was never raped, her life never blighted. But there's an irony in that, isn't there? Because in those worlds, Angel doesn't exist-yet Angel is a miracle and a blessing." He looked up from the city to the woman. "So when you're lying in bed tonight, kept awake by grief, don't think just about what you've lost with your father and Phimie. Think about what you have in this world that you've never known in some others-Angel. Whether God's a Catholic, a Baptist, a Jew, a Muslim, or a quantum mechanic, He gives us compensation for our pain, compensation right here in this world, not just in those parallel to it and not just in some afterlife. Always compensation for the pain ... if we recognize it when we see it..". "No, that's not necessary," Junior said, trying to sound casual. "Considering what you told me, I'm sure whoever's bothering me here can't be Vanadium. I mean, him being on the run, with plenty of his own troubles, the last thing he'd do is follow me here just to screw with my head a little..". In the minister's house, Junior had seen no indications of a sister. No family photos, no high-school graduation portrait proudly framed. Of course, he had not been interested in their family, for he had been all-consumed by Seraphim.. In abject misery, Junior lay waiting to go under the knife, more eager to be cut than he would have thought possible only a few hours before. The mere promise of this surgery thrilled him more than all the sex that he'd ever enjoyed between the age of thirteen and the Thursday just past.. Shuddering, rubbing furiously at himself, he stumbled into the bathroom. In the mirror, he confronted a face he hardly recognized: swollen, lumpy peppered with red hives.. They were inseparable, her son and this cherished girl, as they had been virtually since the moment they had met, more than six years ago. The special perception that they shared--all the ways things are-accounted for part of their closeness, but only part. The bond between them was so deep that it defied understanding, as mysterious as the concept of the Trinity, three gods in one.. "Last I noticed, his car was out. Let me check." Sparky put down his phone and went to look in the garage. When he returned, he said, "Nope. Still out. When he parties, he usually parties late..". Magusson's idea of a laugh. "And they didn't even bother to post a warning. In fact, that sign was still up, inviting hikers to enjoy the view from the observation deck..". Now, twenty-four hours later, when Sparky answered his telephone and heard Tom Vanadium, he said, "You looking for a little company? I've got another bottle of Merlot where the last one came from..". Celestina sensed an easy camaraderie between these two men, but also tension that was perhaps related to the reference to an illegal search.. As he entered, the visitor's back was to Junior, and he moved toward the table, where dead Victoria sat with her head on her folded arms. She looked for all the world as though she were just resting.. In that instant, she knew the dreadful shape of the future, if not its fine details.. Just as the man turned away, Junior got a glimpse of what he wore under a London Fog raincoat. Between the lapels of the coat: a white shirt with a wing collar, a black bow tie, the suggestion of black-satin lapels like those on a tuxedo jacket.. Although rain-pasted to her skin, the fine hairs rose on the nape of her neck. The gooseflesh crawling across her arms had nothing to do with her cold, wet clothes.. In the main room, on his way toward the front door, Junior saw Celestina White surrounded by adoring fatheads, nattering ninnies, dithering dolts, saps and boneheads, oafs and gawks and simpletons. She was still as gorgeous as her shamelessly beautiful paintings. If the opportunity arose, Junior would have more use for her than for her so called art.. Needlepoint provided no sanctuary. Junior's hands trembled just badly enough to make accurate stitchery impossible.. Junior had come to the gumshoe four days ago, with business that might have made a reputable investigator uncomfortable. He needed to discover whether Seraphim White had given birth at a San Francisco hospital earlier this month and where the baby might be found. Since he wasn't prepared to reveal any relationship to Seraphim, and since he resisted devising a cover story on the assumption that a competent private detective would at once see through it, his interest in this baby inevitably seemed sinister.. WALLY HAD NOT gone home with Death, but they had definitely been at the dance together.. According to the newspapers, the police also credited him with the murders of Naomi, Victoria Bressler, and Ned Gnathic (whom they had connected to Celestina). He was wanted, too, for the attempted murder of Dr. Walter Lipscomb (evidently Ichabod), for the attempted murder of Grace White, and for assault with intent to kill Celestina White and her daughter, Angel, and for the assault on Lenora Kickmule (whose foxtail-bedecked Pontiac he had stolen in Eugene, Oregon).

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