

## **ASIDE THE VEIL OF THE SAITIC ISIS OR AN INQUIRY INTO THE ORIGIN OF LANGUAGES**

When he came to himself, sick and weak from the poison and with an aching skull, he was in a room with brick walls and bricked-up windows. The door had no bars and no visible lock. But when he tried to get to his feet he felt bonds of sorcery holding his body and mind, resilient, clinging, tightening as he moved. He could stand, but could not take a step towards the door. He could not even reach his hand out. It was a horrible sensation, as if his muscles were not his own. He sat down again and tried to hold still. The spellbonds around his chest kept him from breathing deeply, and his mind felt stifled too, as if his thoughts were crowded into a space too small for them. Celestina looked up from the scarred top of the desk toward the fog-white sky beyond the window, from reality to the promise. Smiling, pulling the blanket more tightly around herself, she said, "You look after your old mom, don't you?" Dusk had arrived, strangling the day, and the throttled sky hung low, as blue-black as bruises. The streetlights had come on. Gouts of red light from pulsing emergency beacons alchemized the rain from teardrops into showers of blood. While the doctor proceeded with his evening rounds, the nurse remained with Junior until it was clear that the tranquilizer had calmed him and that he was no longer in danger of succumbing to another bout of hemorrhagic vomiting. "Wait," said Deed, holding out one hand either beseechingly or to block the door. Barty, at the head of the table, sensed Mary's approach only as she was about to touch him. She put a hand on his arm and said, "Daddy, will you turn your chair away from the table and let me sit on your lap?" Sapphires and emeralds, dazzling gems set in clearest white, ebony pupils at the center. Beautiful mysteries, these eyes, but no different now than they had ever been, as far as she could tell. She asked Edom to stay in the main house, so Barty wouldn't be alone while she visited Maria Gonzalez for an hour or two. He was pleased to oblige, settling down to watch a television documentary about volcanoes, which promised to include stories about the 1902 eruption of Mont Pelee, on Martinique, which killed 28,000 people within minutes, and other disasters of colossal proportions. "We do look somewhat alike," Edom said, shifting his attention to Jacob's left ear. Deciding that he didn't need an exit line, Junior headed toward the service road and his Suburban. 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. We have inhabited both the actual and the imaginary realms for a long time. But we don't live in either place the way our parents or ancestors did. Enchantment alters with age, and with the age. THE RAIN THAT HAD threatened to wash out the morning funeral finally rinsed the afternoon, but by nightfall the Oregon sky was clean and dry. From horizon to horizon spread an infinity of icy stars, and at the center of them hung a bright sickle moon as silver as steel. Leaning across the front seat, he lowered the passenger's window six inches. Then he lowered the driver's-side window an equal distance. He vanished through some hole, some slit, some tear bigger than anything through which Tom flipped his quarters. His body ached, too, especially his back, from the battering that he had taken. He remembered hitting the floor with his chin, and he supposed that he might have gotten knocked about the face more than he realized or remembered. If so, there would be bruises soon, but bruises would fade with time; in the interim, they might make him even more attractive to women, who would want to console him and kiss away the pain-especially when they discovered that he had sustained his injuries in a brutal fight, while rescuing a neighbor from a would-be rapist. On the third of June, he found another useless Bartholomew, and on Saturday, the twenty-fifth, two deeply disturbing events occurred. He switched on his kitchen radio only to discover that "Paperback Writer," yet another Beatles song, had climbed to the top of the charts, and he received a call from a woman. Had Junior been chest-deep in wet concrete, he would have been more mobile than he was now. He had no feeling in his legs. Now he had to focus on being ready for the evening of January 12: the reception for Celestina White's art show. She had adopted her sister's baby. Little Bartholomew was in her care; and soon, the kid would be within Junior's reach. Into the autumn of 1967, Junior reviewed hundreds of thousands of phone listings, and occasionally he located a rare Bartholomew. In San Rafael or Marinwood. In Greenbrae or San Anselmo. Located and investigated and cleared them of any connection with Seraphim White's bastard baby. "Please just call me Tom. I've been forcibly retired from the Oregon State Police, with full disability because of this face, so I'm not officially a detective anymore. Yet until Enoch Cain is behind bars, where he belongs, I'm not ready to be anything but a cop, official or not." Visibly nonplussed by Junior's blithe failure to terminate the handshake when the shaking stopped, the fussy Neddy didn't want to be so rude as to yank his hand loose, or to cause a scene regardless of how small, but Junior, smiling and pretending to be as socially dense as concrete, failed to respond to a polite tug. So Neddy waited, allowing his hand to be held, and his face, previously as white as piano keys, brightened to a shade of pink that clashed with his red boutonniere. Matching her fierce attention with a sudden intensity of his own, Joey said, "Bartholomew." He turned over the two most recent discards. Neither was a jack of spades, and both were what he expected them to be. "I wish my Rico could have met your Harrison, too," Maria told Grace, referring to the husband who had abandoned her. "Maybe the reverend could've done with words what I couldn't do with my foot in Rico's trasero." "Does my dad like Christmas?" Barty asked, sitting on the grave grass in front of the headstone. During the course of this momentous day, he had employed Zedd learned techniques to channel his hot anger into a red-hot rage. Now, without any conscious effort on his part, rage grew into molten-white fury. Agnes knew now why this prognostication had dismayed rather charmed her: If you dared to believe in the good fortune predicted he cards, then you were obliged to believe in the bad, as well. Testing Celestina's nerves as fully as Barty had tested his mother's, Angel pulled-levered -shinnied-swung herself so fast up through the tree, arriving at the boy's side while red streaks still enlivened a sky that was repainting itself purple. She stood in the crook of limbs with him, and her

delighted laughter rang down through the cathedral oak. 1975 through 1978: Hare ran from Dragon, Snake fled from Horse, and '78 bounced to the beat, because disco ruled. The reborn Bee Gees dominated the airwaves. John Travolta had the look. Rhodesian rebels, grasping the dangers inherent in any battle between equals, had the manful courage to slaughter unarmed women missionaries and schoolgirls. Spinks won the title from Ali, and Ali won it back from Spinks..Everyone confronted Agnes with expressions of puzzlement and expectation, and she looked from one to another. Paul. Maria. Francesca. Bonita. Grace. Edom. Jacob. Finally Celestina.. "That would be wrong. A diary's private." He supposed that to a detective nothing was sacred, but he was nonetheless a little shocked that Vanadium needed to ask that question..The white padded eye patches rebuffed her, and she realized how profoundly the boy's double enucleation would affect how easily she could read his moods and know his mind. Here was a littler loss until now shadowed by the greater destruction. Denied the evidence of his eyes, she would need to be better at noting and interpreting nuances of his body language-also changed by blindness-and his voice, for there would be no soul revealed by hand-painted, plastic implants..AFTER THE ENCOUNTER with the quarter-spitting vending machines, Junior wanted to kill another Bartholomew, any Bartholomew, even if he had to drive to some far suburb like Terra Linda to do it, even if he had to drive farther and stay overnight in a Holiday ay Inn an eat steam-table food off a buffet crawling with other diners' cold germs and garnished with their loose hairs..On hearing of Bartholomew's-and/or Celestina's-death, Neddy would be on the phone to the police, pointing them toward Junior, in twelve seconds. Maybe fourteen.. "Sometimes these sympathetic vibrations are very apparent, but alot of the time, they're so subtle that you can hear them only if you're unusually perceptive." He suspected the blame lay with his exceptional sensitivity to violence, death, and loss. Previously it manifested as an explosive emptying of the stomach, this time as a purging of lower realms..In spite of the bravado of the responses in Junior's unspoken half of the conversation, he was increasingly unnerved by Vanadium. The cop was a lunatic, all right, but he was something more than a mere nut case..While Junior had been hospitalized , Vanadium had searched his lace, with or without a warrant. Turnabout was satisfying..Junior needed something in his life, a missing element without which he could never be complete, something more than a heart mate, more than German or French, or karate, and for as long as he could remember, he'd been searching for this mysterious substance, this enigmatic object, this skill, this thingumajigger, this dowhacky, this flumadiddle, this force or person, this insight, but the problem was that he didn't know what he was searching for, and so often when he seemed to have found it, he hadn't found it after all, therefore he worried that if ever he did find it, then he might throw it away, because he would not realize that it was, in fact, the very jigger or gigamaree that he'd been in search of since childhood..Up flew his hands, as white as doves, flapping as though trying to escape from the sleeves of his raincoat, as if he were a magician rather than a musician..Once more crowding his quarry, Junior said, "I'm amazed you'd recognize me, since I haven't been to the lounge often."..Though they had expected the cause of the explosion, both Paul and Harrison were halted by shock at the sight of all this ruination. They had expected to find the car jammed into the wall of the house, never this far inside. The speed required to penetrate this distance into the structure beggared Paul's skills of calculation and made him wonder if even recklessness and alcohol were sufficient to produce, such a catastrophe..Similarities between Naomi and her mom- ended with appearances. Sheena was loud, crass, self-absorbed, and had the vocabulary of a brothel owner specializing in service to sailors with Tourette's syndrome..No longer able to judge the boy's degree of sleepiness by his eyes, she relied on him to tell her when to stop reading. At his request, she closed the book after forty-seven pages, at the end of Chapter 2..In the top drawer, in addition to the expected items, Tom Vanadium found a gallery brochure for an art exhibition. In the hooded flashlight beam, the name Celestina White seemed to flare off the glossy paper as though printed in reflective ink..At the farthest end of the loft from the stereo speakers, voices nevertheless had to be raised in even the most intimate exchanges. The artist who had created In the Baby 's Brain Lies the Parasite of Doom, Version 6, however, possessed a voice as deep, sharp-edged, and penetrating as his talent.. "Sure. That's how it works with everything. Everything that can happen does happen, and each different way of happening makes a whole new place."..But with the silencer attached, the pistol was useful only for close-up work. After passing through a sound-suppressor, the bullet would exit the muzzle at a lower than usual velocity, perhaps with an added wobble, and accuracy would drop drastically at a distance.. "I was once doubting Thomas," said the detective, but not from beside the bed any longer. His voice seemed to come from across the room, perhaps near the door, though he had made not a sound as he'd moved..At eleven o'clock Saturday morning, having just settled in the hotel after arriving from St. Mary's, they were waiting for the SFPD to deliver suitcases of clothes and toiletries that Rena Moller, Celestina's neighbor, had packed according to her instructions. While waiting, the three of them took an early lunch-or a late breakfast-at a room service table in the living room..Here they came at last, guns drawn, wary. Different uniforms, yet they reminded him of the cops in Oregon, gathered in the shadow of the fire tower. The same faces: hard-eyed, suspicious..He waited for Otter to nod, but Otter stood motionless..Even on good days, when he wasn't hassled by the spirits of dead cops and wasn't prepping himself to commit murder, Junior sometimes grew uncomfortable in these bustling crowds. This afternoon, he felt especially claustrophobic as he shouldered through the throng-and admittedly paranoid, too.. "By the way he acted, you'd have sworn that he gave me and Angel shelter in the storm, back then, instead of turning us out to freeze in the snow.".. "No. Charming," she disagreed. "There's a meaning to it. Everything has a meaning, dear."..As spectacularly busty as the not-yet-dead Jayne Mansfield, Frieda never wore a bra. In 1966, this free-swinging style was little seen. Initially, Junior didn't realize bralessness was a declaration of Frieda's liberation; he thought it meant she was a slut..He threw away his necktie, because in the elevator, on the way down from Renee's-or Renee's--penthouse, and again on the walk back to his apartment, he had scrubbed his tongue with it. On further consideration, he threw away everything that he had been wearing, including his

shoes..And now Cain was aware of her, interested in her. Informed of this development, Harrison would no doubt rethink his position..When he reached the Suburban and closed his right hand around the handle on the driver's door, he felt something peculiar against his palm. A small, cold object balanced there.."See this?" He placed the pepper shaker in front of her on the room-service table and held the salt shaker concealed in his hand..Regrettably, he had no choice but to conclude that she hadn't made up her mind whether to keep the baby or to seek out an illegal abortion without Junior's approval. She had been thinking about scraping his child out of her womb without even telling him..He placed a phone call to Kaitlin Hackachak, his trollish and avaricious sister-in-law, asking her to dispose of Naomi's things, their furniture, and whatever of his own possessions he chose to leave behind. Although she had been awarded a quarter of a million dollars in the family settlement with the state and county, Kaitlin would be at the house by dawn's first light if she thought she might make ten bucks from liquidating its contents.."The doctors," he continued, "needed to repair damage to the left frontal sinus, the sphenoidal sinus, and the sinus cavernous, which had all been partially crushed by that pewter candlestick. Frontal, malar, ethmoid, maxillary, sphenoid, and palatine bones had to be rebuilt to properly contain my right eye, because it sort of ... well, it dangled. That was just for starters, and there was considerable essential dental work, as well. I elected not to have any cosmetic surgery."..Although he ate more meals in restaurants than not, he hadn't ordered a burger in twenty-two months, since finding the quarter embedded in the half-melted slice of cheddar, in December of '65. Indeed, since then, he'd never risked a sandwich of any kind in a restaurant, limiting his selections to foods that were served open on the plate..almost recoiled in disgust. She held the newborn so that its mother could look into..Late Thursday, following a nine-hour session with Hisscus, Nork, and Knacker, Magusson--negotiating in conjunction with the Hackachak counsel--had indeed reached acceptable terms. Kaitlin Hackachak would receive \$250,000 for the loss of her sister. Sheena and Rudy would receive \$900,000 to compensate them for their severe emotional pain and suffering; this allowed them to undergo a lot of therapy in Las Vegas. Junior would receive \$4,250,000. Magusson's fee was twenty percent prior to trial--forty percent if a settlement had been reached after the start of court proceedings--which left Junior with \$3,400,000. All payments to plaintiffs were net of taxes..Indeed, even the distinct fragrance of pulp paper, yellow with age, was alone sufficient to start him fantasizing..The accountant lived in a white Georgian house on a street lined with huge old evergreens..More likely than not, Victoria spoke directly to the maniac detective. Even if she reported her sordid fabrications to another officer, it would have gotten back to Vanadium, and the cop would have sought her out at once to hear her filth firsthand, whereupon she would have enhanced her story until it sounded as though Junior had grabbed her knockers and had tried to shove his tongue down her throat..He was astonished that adoption records would be sealed and so closely guarded when a child was being placed with a member of its immediate family, with its mother's sister..He spat on his right thumb, scrubbed the thumb against one of the dried drips on the floor, rubbed thumb and forefinger together, and brought the freshened spoor to his nose. He smelled blood..He had nothing against Negroes. He didn't wish them ill. He wasn't prejudiced. Live and let live. He believed that as long as they stayed with their own kind and abided by the rules of a polite society, like everyone else, they had a right to live in peace..Agnes met them, pulling Grace and Angel to her side. Her eyes were bright with excitement. "Tom, you're a man of faith, even if you've sometimes been troubled in it. Tell me what you make of all this."..In the tree, the girl grinned. "Even if he stays up there until dawn, he'll still be coming down in the dark, won't he. Oh, we'll be fine, Aunt Aggie..As Tom reached Celestina, she said, "Shots." She said, "Gunshots." She held the receiver in one hand and pulled at her hair with the other, as if with the administration of a little pain, she might wake up from this nightmare. She said, "He's in Oregon."..Holding a shaker in each hand, Tom walked them forward, causing them to diverge slightly at first, but then moving them along exactly parallel to each other..Industrial Woman, which he'd purchased for a little more than nine thousand dollars, less than eighteen months ago and at another gallery, would fetch at least thirty thousand in the current market, so rapidly had Bavor Poriferan's reputation risen..Leave the lamps burning, the door unlocked. A murderer, frantic to vanish while the victim remained undiscovered, wouldn't be worried about the cost of electricity or about protecting against burglary.."The piece that's intrigued me," Junior revealed, "is the one that's rather like a c-c-candlestick. It's quite different from the others."..At a point where deep water met the shoreline, Junior drove off the road and onto the strand. He parked twenty feet from the water, facing the lake, and switched off the headlights and the engine.."Sure they do," Barty said. "But I think Maria embroidered the birds just because they were pretty."..No scent of gasoline fouled the air. Apparently, the tank had not burst. Sudden immolation seemed unlikely--but only an hour ago so had Joey's untimely death..Yet, uncaught, the quarter would have dropped to the floor. Junior would have heard it ring off the tiles. Which he hadn't..Maria Elena Gonzalez--such an imposing figure in spite of her diminutive stature that even three names seemed insufficient to identify her--was still present. Although the crisis had passed, she wasn't ready to trust that nurses and doctors, by themselves, could provide Agnes with adequate care..San Francisco's pre-Christmas cheer had deserted it. The glow and glitter of the season had given way to a mood as dark and ominous as *The Cancer Lurks Unseen, Version 1*..No one could put him in prison because of his dreams. "I can't remember. Those are the worst, when you're not able to remember them--don't you think? They're always so silly when you can recall the details. When you draw a blank ... they seem more threatening."..He was filled with bitter remorse for having suspected Naomi of poisoning his cheese sandwich or his apricots. She--had in fact adored him, as he had always believed. She would never have lifted a hand against him, never. Dear Naomi would have died for him. In fact, she had.."Let's roll 'em. out," Paul said, and he returned to the station wagon to ride shotgun beside Agnes..No mystery here. No reason to leap to the ceiling and cling upside down like a frightened cartoon cat..In January 1965, Magusson had sent Cain to Nolly as a client, not sure why the creep needed a private detective. That had turned out to be the

business about Seraphim White's baby. Simon's warning to be careful of Enoch Cain had helped to shape Nolly's decision to withhold the information about the child's placement.. "I'm glad to hear it," Tom said. His thin smile might have been ironic, though it wasn't easy to interpret the meaning of any subtle expression on his hammered face. In the kitchen again, Junior spread the blanket on the floor, to one side of the blood. He rolled Vanadium onto the blanket, and drew the ends of it together, fashioning a sled with which to drag the detective out of the house.. She hung her head, covered her face with her chilled hands, and wondered how her mother could sustain faith in God when such terrible things could happen to someone as innocent as Phimie.. Angel, busy with a cookie through most of this, licked crumbs from her lips and asked Paul, "Do you have a puppy?". The most shameful thing Junior found was the "art" on the walls. Tasteless, sentimentalized realism. Bright landscapes. Still lifes of fruit and flowers. Even an idealized group portrait of Prosser, his late wife, and Zelda. Not one painting spoke to the bleakness and terror of the human condition: mere decoration, not art.. Greed. So easy, taking money from the rubes. Soon, instead of peeling off a little from each game, he sought bigger kills.. Jacob didn't know how he could ever bear to look at Agnes when she came home from the hospital. The sorrow in her eyes would kill him as surely as a knife to the heart.. Wally's help, not just with the apartment, but with his time and love, had made an incalculable difference.. At the elevators, the orderly suggested that Edom and Jacob take a second cab and meet them on the surgical floor.. By lunch, he had turned the final page, and he was so full of the tale that he seemed to have no room for food. While his mother kept reminding him to eat, he regaled her with the details of John Thomas Stuart's great adventures with LummoX, as though every word that Heinlein had written were not science fiction, but truth.. He got in the Suburban, pulled the door shut, but didn't at once start the engine.. The door was falling shut. With no more sound than the day makes when it turns to night, the detective had gone.. Hope became easier to sustain when late 1966 and 1967 brought the biggest advance in women's fashions since the invention of the sewing needle: the miniskirt, and then the micromini. Already, Mary Quant-of all things, a British designer-had conquered England and Europe with her splendid creation; now she brought America out of the dark ages of psychopathic modesty.. The candlestick was gone. The pedestal on which it had stood now held a Grislin bronze so devastatingly brilliant that one quick look at it would give nightmares to nuns and assassins alike.. You ever hear it, Enoch? I'm that someone for you, of course, in a romantic sense.. "He held forth the single red rose. "For you. Not that it compares. No flower could..". With the infant in her arms, the heavyset nurse pressed in beside Celestina, who.. "You know," Tom said when the second round of drinks arrived, "hard as it is to believe, some places never heard of martinis..". "If I ever have trots, you'll know..". And then in the Cheese voice: "CAN WE LISTEN TO THE BOOK TALK IN YOUR ROOM?". Junior was disturbed that the mysterious chanteuse had been performing when he wasn't home. He felt violated. Invaded.. In the time of the kings, mages gathered in the court of Enlad and later in the court of Havnor to counsel the king and take counsel together, using their arts to pursue goals they agreed were good. But in the dark years, wizards sold their skills to the highest bidder, pitting their powers one against the other in duels and combats of sorcery, careless of the evils they did, or worse than careless. Plagues and famines, the failure of springs of water, summers with no rain and years with no summer, the birth of sickly and monstrous young to sheep and cattle, the birth of sickly and monstrous children to the people of the isles-all these things were charged to the practices of wizards and witches, and all too often rightly so.. altogether by taking slow deep breaths, slow deep breaths, and by remembering that each of us has a right to be happy, to be fulfilled, to be free of fear.. "September 20, 1902, Birmingham, Alabama, church fire--one hundred fifteen dead. March 4, 1908, Collinwood, Ohio, school fire, one hundred seventy-six dead..". THE MORNING THAT it happened was bright and blue in March, two months after Barty took Angel for a dry walk in wet weather, seven weeks after Celestina married Wally, and five weeks after the happy newlyweds completed their purchase of the Galloway house next door to the Lampion place. Selma Galloway, retired from a professorship years earlier, had subsequently retired further, taking advantage of the equity in her long-owned home to buy a little condo on the beach in nearby Carlsbad.. Because this kind of fictional fact, like maps of imaginary realms, is of real interest to some readers, I include the description after the stories. I also redrew the geographical maps for this book, and while doing so, happily discovered a very old one in the Archives in Havnor.. As before, the name tolled through him like the ominous note of the deepest bass bell in a cathedral carillon, struck on a cold midnight.. Returning from his tests, he'd gotten into bed without stripping off the thin, hospital-issue robe. He was still wearing it over his pajamas.. Maria Elena Gonzalez-no longer a seamstress in a dry-cleaners, but proprietor of Elena's Fashions, a small dress shop one block off the town square-joined Agnes, Barty, Edom, and Jacob on Christmas.. Meanwhile, she could offer him only a few pieces of ice, which he was forbidden to chew. "Let them melt in your mouth..". because the car was either struck again by the pickup or hit by other traffic or perhaps it collided with a parked vehicle, but whatever the cause, the breath was knocked out of her, and her screams became ragged gasps.. Instead, she saw Phimie reborn. She saw, as well, a child endangered. Somewhere out there was a rapist capable of extreme cruelty and violence, a man who would--if Phimie was correct--react unpredictably if ever he learned of his.. Barty's reading and writing skills appeared to be related to his talent for math, as well. To him, language was first phonics, a sort of music that symbolized objects and ideas, and this music was then translated into written "syllables using the alphabet-which he saw as a system of math employing twenty-six digits instead of ten.. Agnes supposed Jacob trembled in anticipation of the crash of an airliner or at least a light aircraft. Edom might be calculating the odds that this serene place-at this specific hour-would be the impact point for one of those planet-killing asteroids that reputedly wiped most life off the earth every few hundred thousand years or so.. Junior said, "I should know your name from the playbill at the lounge, but I'm as bad with names as you are good with faces..". "Your mother's an artist. Besides, you wouldn't want to put poor Mrs. Orwall out of a job, would you?". Although she would have felt ridiculous phrasing this question in these words to

any other three-year-old, no better way existed to ask it of her special son: "Kiddo ... do you realize you're speaking of your dad in the present tense?" "My God," Junior said, pretending that his befuddlement had faded and that his mind had just now clarified, "you think Naomi was murdered, don't you?" "Yes. In syrup form. It's a good item for your home medicine chest, in case your child ever swallows poison and you need to purge it from him quickly." Junior strove to appear properly mortified. "Thought I heard something. Searched the apartment." Of the curiosities Junior uncovered, Frieda's weapons interested him most. Guns were stashed throughout the apartment: revolvers, pistols, and two pistol-grip shotguns. Sixteen altogether..She got out of the cab and stood on the sidewalk in front of the gallery, her legs as shaky as those of a newborn colt..Tom Vanadium liked this man at once. Cop instinct told him that Damascus was honest and reliable. Priestly insight suggested even more impressive qualities.

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