

## AS THE OLD FOLKS WOULD SAY

Either operating on first-aid knowledge of his own or responding to an instruction from the medic, the cop slipped a foam pillow under Agnes's head..Tom Vanadium liked this man at once. Cop instinct told him that Damascus was honest and reliable. Priestly insight suggested even more impressive qualities..He pushed on the door, but still it resisted, and he surprised himself by letting out a bellow of frustration that expressed quite the opposite of self-control, though no one listening could have the slightest doubt about his determination to commit and command..Crouching beside the boy as he rubbed a brighter shine onto the granite, Agnes said, "Barty, honey, why are you ....Reverend White's polished, somewhat theatrical, yet sincere voice rose out of the past to issue this threat in Junior's memory as he had issued it that night, from a tape recorder, while Junior had been dancing a sweaty horizontal boogie with Seraphim in her parsonage bedroom..Therefore, after the nasty shooting, as the Bartholomew hunt continued, so did the good life..The second medic wheeled the gurney to the rear of the van, calling for one of the policemen to accompany him to the hospital. Apparently, he needed help if he was to deliver the baby and also stabilize Apes while en route.. "No, I didn't see him," Junior reminded the attorney. "I just assumed, when this harassment started here-".The white Buick glided through the tides of fog like a ghost ship plying a ghost sea..The musician's behavior required explanation. After wending through the crowd, Junior located the man in front of a painting so egregiously beautiful that any connoisseur of real art could hardly resist the urge to slash the canvas to ribbons..Celestina indicated to Tom that he should sit at the head of the table, facing Agnes at the foot. As Wally lowered himself into the empty chair to Tom's left, Celestina picked up two items from the sideboard and put them in front of Tom, before sitting to his right..By now, Junior realized that he had been locked in a meditative trance for at least eighteen hours. He had settled into the lotus position at five o'clock Monday afternoon-and Bob Chicane had shown up or their regular instruction session at eleven Tuesday morning.. "He'll just think I'm an incompetent detective. If he comes around wanting his five hundred bucks back, I'll give it to him..".When the pianist eventually launched into "Someone to Watch over Me," he didn't appear to be responding to a request, considering that a few other numbers had been played since the most recent gratuity. The tune was, after all, in his nightly repertoire..Drawing from a well of inspiration deeper than instinct, Junior knew that if ever he crossed paths with a man named Bartholomew, he must be prepared to deal with him as aggressively as he had dealt with Naomi. And without delay..Gore made him sick. He refused to attend movies that dwelt on the consequences of violence, and he had even less of a stomach for blood in real life.. "Miss White," he continued, still facing the window, "not long before you arrived in surgery this morning, your sister died on the table. We hadn't delivered the baby yet, and perhaps couldn't have done so, by cesarean, in time to prevent brain damage, so for both the sake of the mother and child, heroic efforts were made to bring Phimie back and ensure continued circulation to the fetus until we could extract it..".Wally gave her tests. She's got an exceptional understanding of color, spatial relationships, and geometric forms for a child her age. She may be a visual prodigy..".As she tucked the bedclothes around him again, she said, "Barty, I don't think you should let anyone else see how you can walk in the rain without getting wet. Not Edom and Jacob. Not anyone at all. And anything else special that you discover you can do ... we should keep it a secret between you and me..".Her father respected and admired Tom, so she was thankful for his presence. And anyone who could survive whatever catastrophe had left him with this cubistic face was a man she wanted on her team in a crisis..With his startling combination of a Mediterranean complexion and rust-red hair, his good looks, and his fit physique, Paul had the exotic appearance of a pulp-fiction hero. In particular, he liked to imagine that he might pass for Doc Savage's brother..This wasn't thrill killing-which, now that he'd had time to think about it, he realized was beneath him, even if in the service of personal growth. This would be murder for good, justifiable cause..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..The word diarrhea was inadequate to describe this affliction. In spite of the books he'd read to improve his vocabulary, Junior could not think of any word sufficiently descriptive and powerful enough to convey his misery and the hideousness of his ordeal..He slid his plate aside. From a pocket, he withdrew a quarter, which always served him as well with children as with murderers..stopped by to help Agnes, and some offered to stay with her at night. She gratefully accepted assistance with the housecleaning, laundry, and shopping, but she declined the all-night company because of her dreams..The coin stopped turning, pinched flat between the knuckles of the cops middle and ring fingers. He retrieved a box of Kleenex from the nightstand and offered it to his suspect. "Here..".At nearly forty years of age, Edom still dreamed of that grim summer afternoon, although not as often as in the past. When it troubled his sleep these days, it was a nightmare that gradually metamorphosed into a dream of tenderness and hope. Until the last few years, he'd always awakened when the roses were being jammed into his mouth or when the thorns flicked through his eyelashes, or when Agnes began to strike their father with the Bible, thus seeming to assure worse punishment. This additional act, this transition from horror to hope before he woke, had been added when Agnes was pregnant with Barty. Edom didn't know why this should be so, and he didn't try to analyze it. He was simply grateful for the change, because he woke now in a state of peace, never with worse than a shudder, no longer with a hoarse cry of anguish..For Gammoner, exactly as for Pinchbeck, Google had provided: a driver's license that was actually registered with the California Department of Motor Vehicles, and that would, therefore, stand up to any cop's inspection; a legitimate social-security card; a birth certificate actually on file with the cited courthouse; and an authentic, valid passport..Reaching between the slats, Agnes tickled the pink piggies on his left foot. "Toes..". "If you're a dowser, better dowse," said Licky, coming up alongside him and looking sidelong into his face. "And if you're not, you'd better dowse all the same.

That way you'll stay above ground longer." Vanadium continued in his characteristic drone, a tone at odds with the colorful content of his speech: "A man takes one look at his wife's body, starts to sweat harder than a copulating hog, spews like a frat boy at the end of a long beer-chugging contest, and chucks till he chucks up blood-that's not the response of your average murderer." The infant Bartholomew was here in San Francisco. He must be found. He must be dispatched. By the time Junior devised a plan of action to locate the child, he was so hot with anger that he was sweating, and he stripped off one of his two pairs of briefs..The infant's smile was so captivating and his puzzlement so comically earnest that both expressions worked on Agnes's misery as surely as yeast leavens dough. Her bitter tears turned sweet..Paul couldn't remember when he began to love her. Not at first sight. But before she contracted polio. Love came gradually, and by the time it flowered, its roots were deep..dent? You do believe that? Because I don't see ... I don't know how could work with someone who thought I was capable of . . . ".At those cutting-edge galleries where he attended receptions, no one got in without a printed invitation. And even with the authentic paper in hand, you might still be refused entry if you failed to pass the cool test. The criteria of cool were the same as at the current hottest dance clubs, and in fact the bouncers controlling the gate at the finest avant-garde galleries were those who worked the clubs..Pecan cakes, cinnamon custard pies boxed in insulated coolers, gifts wrapped with bright paper and glittery ribbons. Agnes Lampion made deliveries to those friends who were on her list of the needful, but also to friends who were blessed with plenty. The sight of each beloved face, each embrace, each kiss, each smile, each cheerfully spoken "Merry Christmas" at every stop fortified her heart for the sad task awaiting her when all gifts were given..At the top of the candlestick, the drip pan and the socket were marked by a wine-red drizzle. The color of well-aged bloodstains..He reached toward the dead man's closed hand, but he couldn't find the courage to touch it. He was afraid that if he pried open the stiff fingers, he would discover a quarter inside..Scamp spent Wednesday ravishing him. It wasn't love, but there was comfort in being familiar with his partner's equipment..He was so innocent. This sweet boy, this pure and stainless infant, couldn't possibly have an enemy in the world, and she could not imagine any son of hers earning enemies, not if she raised him well. This was just a silly card reading..Her shaking threatened her composure. She was Barty's mother and father, his only rock, and she must always be strong for him. She clenched her teeth and tensed her body and gradually quieted the tremors by an act of will..Kathleen expected this would prove to be true. She herself was not frightened by Thomas Vanadium's appearance; but then she had been prepared for it before she first saw him. And she wasn't a murderer, fearful of retribution, to whom this particular face would seem like Judgment personified..If the detective believed that Seraphim had been raped, his natural desire to exact vengeance for his friend's daughter might motivate him to commit the relentless harassment that Junior had endured now for four days..Agnes could almost visualize the three-dimensional geometric model that her little prodigy had created in his mind, which he now relied upon to reach the upper floor without a serious stumble. Pride, wonder, and sorrow pulled her heart in different directions..ready to hear me. However long you need. But something ... something extraordinary happened here before you arrived." 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..Dinner was cooking in the upper of the two ovens. He switched the bottom oven, setting it at warm, and dropped open the door..At the bedside, Joshua Nunn, friend and physician, looked up as Paul approached. He rose as though under a yoke of iron..Consequently, Edom was abroad in the land with pies and parcels, following a list of names and addresses provided by his sister, even though he believed an unprecedentedly violent earthquake, the fabled Big One, was likely to strike before noon, certainly before dinner. This was the last day of the rest of his life..Mysteriously, on the first day of sunny weather in weeks, the 707 had crashed into Jamaica Bay, Queens, killing everyone aboard. Now, in 1965, it remained the worst commercial-aviation disaster in the nation's history, and because of the unprecedented dramatic television coverage, the story was a permanent scar in Celestina's memory, although she had been living a continent away at the time..With the same surprising ease that she had gotten a plane out of San Francisco on a one-hour notice, Celestina booked two return seats on an early-evening flight from Oregon, as though she had a supernatural travel agent..The blue vault above, cloudless now, was the most threatening sky that Edom had ever seen. The air was astonishingly dry so soon after a storm. And still. Hushed. Earthquake weather. Before this momentous day was done, great temblors and five-hundred-foot tidal waves would rock and swamp the coast..As the paramedic shoved the gurney across the step-notched bumper, its collapsible legs scissored down. Agnes was rolled headfirst into the ambulance..Clearly, she had learned nothing from her reading. No sincere and thoughtful student of Zedd would be as sorely lacking in self-control as Frieda Bliss..Celestina, surprised by Lipscomb's arrival, was still mentally numb from Neddy's harangue. "Doctor, I didn't know you were coming." But he was more than she had ever imagined her boy to be, more than merely a prodigy..Paul shook his head. "Oh, no. People look at our marriage, and they think I gave up so much, but I got back a lot more than I gave." "Longer to wait between Christmases," she said. "And between birthdays. I'd save a bunch of money on gifts." As he said cards, the magician turned a knowing look toward Edom, eliciting from him a responding frown of puzzlement..Edom marveled at Agnes's ability to rise above the past and to transcend so many years of torment. She was able to see the house as simple shelter, whereas to her brothers, it was-and always would be-the place in which their spirits had been shattered. Even living within sight of it would have been out of the question if they had been employed, with options.. "Not so bad, two thousand," Tom heard himself say idiotically. "I mean, compared to nearly four

million." Under other circumstances, Agnes might have blushed, but now her apparently irrational fear of too much life insurance had been vindicated. For a moment, Junior drew a blank on Renee. Reluctantly, he trolled the past and fished up the painful memory: the gorgeous transvestite in the Chanel suit, heir or heiress to an industrial-valve fortune. Of course, you've never seen anything like it, you worthless adolescent twit. You're not old enough to have seen squat, and even if you were older than your own grandfather, you wouldn't have seen anything like this, Dr Kildare, because this here is a true case of voodoo Baptist boils, and they don't come along often! "There's no clear evidence of birth defects, but a couple tests reveal some worrisome anomalies. We'll know when we see the child." He added verisimilitude to his threats by concluding with a few hard punches where they wouldn't show, in her breasts and belly, and then he, went home to Naomi, to whom he'd been married, at that time, less than five months. rearview mirror was not hung with one of those tacky decorative deodorizers. The seats, regularly treated with leather soap, were softer and more supple than they had been when the car had shipped out of. sport shirt just for no reason at all, because she thought he'd look nice in it?" In Maria's kitchen, still just four days past Christmas, Agnes let dissolve her stoic mask, and wept at last. He was about to go in search of the canapes when he half heard one of the guests mention Bartholomew to the reverend's daughter. Only the name rang on his ear, not the words that surrounded it. "Living high. When I wasn't on the road, I had a fine house here in Bright Beach, not this rental shack I'm in now, but a nice little place with an ocean view. You can guess what went wrong." The driver's door opened, shoving aside a damaged tea table, and a man climbed out of the Pontiac. After a while, when no plane crashed on top of him, Jacob got up, went into the kitchen, and mixed a batch of dough for Agnes's favorite treats. Chocolate-chip cookies with coconut and pecans. Lipscomb shifted his gaze from the street below to the source of the rain. "Phimie was not gone long, perhaps a minute-a minute and ten seconds at most-and when she was with us again, it was clear from her condition that the cardiac arrest was most likely secondary to a massive cerebral incident. She was disoriented, paralysis on the right side ... with the distortion of the facial muscles that you saw. Her speech was slurred at first, but then something strange happened. . . . It was then that village sorcery, and above all women's witchery, came into the ill repute that has clung to it since. Witches paid dearly for practicing the arts they thought of as their own. The care of pregnant beasts and women, birthing, teaching the songs and rites, the fertility and order of field and garden, the building and care of the house and its furniture, the mining of ores and metals-these great things had always been in the charge of women. A rich lore of spells and charms to ensure the good outcome of such undertakings was shared among the witches. But when things went wrong at the birth, or in the field, that would be the witches' fault. And things went wrong more often than right, with the wizards warring, using poisons and curses recklessly to gain immediate advantage without thought for what followed after. They brought drought and storm, blights and fires and sicknesses across the land, and the village witch was punished for them. She didn't know why her charm of healing caused the wound to gangrene, why the child she brought into the world was imbecile, why her blessing seemed to burn the seed in the furrows and blight the apple on the tree. But for these ills, somebody had to be to blame: and the witch or sorcerer was there, right there in the village or the town, not off in the warlord's castle or fort, not protected by armed men and spells of defense. Sorcerers and witches were drowned in the poisoned wells, burned in the withered fields, buried alive to make the dead earth rich again. Celestina smiled distractedly. Since arriving at the hotel an hour ago, she had been openly debating with herself whether to call her parents in Spruce Hills or to wait until later in the afternoon, when she might be able to report not just that she had a fianc?, and not only that she had a fianc? who'd been shot and nearly killed, but also that his condition had been upgraded from critical to serious. As she'd explained to Tom, in addition to worrying them with the news about Cain, she'd be stunning them with the announcement that she was going to marry a white man twice her age. "My folks don't have one ounce of prejudice between them, but they sure do have firm ideas about what's appropriate and what's not." This would ring the big bell at the top of the White Family Scale of the Inappropriate. Besides, they were preparing for the funeral of a parishioner, and from personal experience, Celestina knew their day would be full. Nevertheless, at ten minutes past eleven, after picking at her breakfast, she finally decided to call them. Junior shuddered. Vanadium hadn't invented the name. It had genuine if inexplicable resonance with Junior that had nothing to do with the detective. He stood at a window, staring down into the street, his profile to her, and in his silence he searched for the words to describe the "something extraordinary" that he had mentioned earlier. The sight of her sister's blood and the persistence of the flow made Celestina weak with apprehension. She was afraid she had done the wrong thing by delaying hospitalization. Rolling onto her side, fumbling in the dark, Celestina White snared the phone on the third ring. Her hello was also a yawn. "Once out of the coma and stabilized for a few weeks, I was transferred to a hospital in Portland, where I had to undergo eleven surgeries." Candle flames blurred into bright smears, and the faces of her good parents shimmered like the half-seen countenances of angels in dreams. He felt some guilt at this-but only a little. His sister had done much for him; but jobless, ruled by his obsessions, hobbled by too much of his father's dour nature, there wasn't a lot that he could do for her. Just this benign deceit with the cards. By telephone, he had been prepared for this boy. Strange as it was to find a Bartholomew in their lives, given Enoch Cain's peculiar obsession, Tom nonetheless agreed with Celestina that the wife killer could have no way to know about this child-and could certainly have no logical reason to fear him. The only thing they had in common was Harrison White's sermon, which had inspired this boy's name and might have planted the seed of guilt in Cain's mind. On New Year's Day, the town learned that it had lost its first son in Vietnam. Agnes had known the parents all her life, and she despaired that even with her willingness to help, with all her good intentions, there was nothing she could do to ease their pain. She recalled her anguish as she'd waited to learn if Barty's eye tumors had spread along the optic nerve to his brain. The thought of her neighbors losing a child to war made her turn to Paul in the night. "Just hold me," she murmured. Grimacing, she said, "I told the police

about your disgusting little come--on with the ice spoon." Whereas Edom feared the wrath of nature, Jacob knew that the true hand of doom was the hand of humankind..In answer, Wally came running with his heavy medical bag, as he was vow doctor to some people on the pie route. "The weather's a lot better than I expected, so I went back to change into lighter clothes." By air from San Francisco south to Orange County Airport, then farther south along the coast by rental car, one week in the wake of Paul Damascus and his three charges, following directions provided by Paul, Tom Vanadium brought Wally Lipscomb to the Lampion house..As usual, Vanadium had spoken in a monotone, putting no special emphasis on those two words. Yet Junior sensed that the detective harbored doubts about the explanation of the girl's death.."Did they rush you straight in here or did you arrange all the insurance matters at reception, Mr. Pinchbeck?" Down the stairs, through the ground floor, quickly, soundlessly, breath held at times, listening for the other's breathing, listening for the softest squeak of rubber-soled shoes, although the hard clack of cloven hoofs and a whiff of sulfur would not have been surprising. At last he went to the kitchen, full circle from the shiny quarter on the breakfast table to the quarter again. No Cain..NED--"CALL ME NEDDY"--Gnathic was as slim as a flute, with a flute-quantity of holes in his head from which thought could escape before the pressure of it built into an unpleasant music within I his skull. His voice was always soft and harmonious, but frequently he spoke allegro, sometimes even prestissimo, and in spite of his mellow tone, Neddy at maximum tempo was as irritating to the ear as bagpipes bleating out Bolero, if such a thing were possible..This was a memory, not a real voice. Even after you became an accomplished meditator, the mind resisted this degree of blissful oblivion..and tried to sabotage it with aural and visual memories..This was different earthquake weather from that of ten days ago, when he'd made the pie deliveries alone. Then: blue sky, unseasonable warmth, low humidity. Now: low gray clouds, cool air, high humidity..The dinner guest leaned back into the car, as though to retrieve something. Perhaps he, too, had been considerate enough to bring a small gift for his hostess..It's unsettling. For all our delight in the impermanent, the entrancing flicker of electronics, we also long for the unalterable..--and we're from different worlds, which I respect. I respect you and your wonderful family ... your centeredness, your certainty. I want to do this only because it's what I owe you." Evidently, the hero was accustomed to encounters of this nature. He rose, pulled out the unused fourth chair. "Please sit with us." As to the distressing matter of Seraphim's daughter, Junior at first decided to return to San Francisco to torture the truth out of Nolly Wulfstan. Then he realized that he'd been referred to Wulfstan by the same man who had told him that Thomas Vanadium was missing and was believed to be Victoria Bressler's killer.."Oh, sure, I know," Mary said. "But when it's a bad place, you feel it before you go in. So you just go around to the next place that isn't bad. No big deal." "I was raised to understand it," said Celestina, and when she looked across the room, she saw that her words had moved her mother..Instinct, even reason, told him that some connection existed between this person, this Bartholomew, and Celestina. The name had terrified Cain in a bad dream, the very night of the day that he'd killed Naomi, and Vanadium therefore had incorporated it into his psychological-warfare strategy without knowing its significance to his suspect. As strongly as he sensed the connection, he couldn't find the link. He lacked some crucial bit of information..During this same period, having subscribed to the opera, Junior attended a performance of Wagner's *The Ring of the Nibelung*..Later, in early '66, out of his coma and recovering sufficiently to have visitors, Vanadium spent a most difficult hour with his old friend Harrison White. Out of respect for the memory of his lost daughter, and not at all out of concern for his image as a minister, the reverend had refused to acknowledge either that Seraphim had been pregnant or that she'd been raped-although Max Bellini had already confirmed the pregnancy and believed, based on cop's instinct, that it had been the consequence of rape. Harrison's attitude seemed to be that Phimie was gone, that nothing could be gained by opening this wound, and that even if there was a villain involved, the Christian thing was to forgive, if not forget, and to trust in divine justice..The next thing he knew, he was at the kitchen sink, turning off the water, which he couldn't remember having turned on. He appeared to have washed the bloody candlestick-it was clean-but he had no recollection of this bit of housekeeping..Havnor Great Port is the city at the heart of the world, white-towered above its bay; on the tallest tower the sword of Erreth-Akbe catches the first and last of daylight. Through that city passes all the trade and commerce and learning and craft of Earthsea, a wealth not hoarded. There the King sits, having returned after the healing of the Ring, in sign of healing. And in that city, in these latter days, men and women of the islands speak with dragons, in sign of change..She hadn't looked up from her sketching. Although Junior thought she hadn't seen him, she'd apparently been aware of him all along..Junior stalked her, but she eluded him. Always, the song seemed to arise from the next room, but when he passed through the doorway into that space, the voice then sounded as if it came from the room that he'd just left..She kissed his cheek, and he pulled his arms out from under the covers to hug her. Such small arms, but such a fierce hug..Paul Damascus remained busy, filling prescriptions, until he was finally able to take a lunch break at two-thirty..In retrospect, he realized meditation didn't suit him. It was a passive activity, while by nature he was a man of action, happiest when doing..Bob gently encouraged him to return by degrees from the deep meditative state, return, return, return.....judging by the evidence, the nurse was home alone, but Junior raised his voice above the music and called out, "Hello? Is anyone here?" Furthermore, fear of the unknown is a weakness also because it humbles us. Humility, Caesar Zedd declares, is strictly for losers. For the purpose of social and financial advancement, we must pretend to be humble-shuffle our feet and duck our heads and make self-deprecating remarks-because deceit is the currency of civilization. But if ever we wallow in genuine humility, we will be no different from the mass of humanity, which Zedd calls "a sentimental sludge in love with failure and the prospect of its own doom." Instead of opening his left fist, Tom lifted his martini with his right, and on the tablecloth under the glass lay the coin.."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..Celestina sensed an easy camaraderie between these two men, but also tension that was perhaps related to the reference to an illegal search..Angel liked to perch sideways with a drawing tablet in the window seat in Barty's room, look out at the oak tree from the upper floor, and draw pictures inspired by things she heard in whatever book he was currently listening to. Everyone said she was a pretty good artist for a three-year-old, and Barty wished he could see how good she was. He wished he could see Angel, too, just once..With a smudge of flour on one cheek, wiping her hands on a red-and-white checkered dishtowel, Agnes answered the door, saw the car in the driveway, and said, "Paul! You're not walking?" "No. It's, stopped. The thing now is to prevent a recurrence of the emesis, which could trigger more bleeding. He's getting antinausea medication and replacement electrolytes intravenously, and we've applied ice bags to his midsection to reduce the chance of further abdominal-muscle spasms and to help control inflammation."

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