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He found the strength to squeeze her hand tighter than before. "Be safe. Keep Angel safe." on both sides of the property, the neighbors can't see, but some know, have always known, and have less interest. Nothing in life was risk free, so he hesitated only a moment: at the foot of the porch steps before climbing them and knocking on the door. Everything was proceeding precisely as Junior had envisioned in the instant when Naomi had first discovered the rotten section of railing and had nearly fallen without assistance. The entire plan had come to him, wholly formed, in a blink, and during the following two circuits of the observation deck, he had mulled it over, seeking flaws but finding none. When he located the new grave, approximately where he'd guessed that it would be, he was surprised to find a black granite headstone already set in place, instead of a temporary marker painted with the. She said, "Honey, what I'm wondering is ... could you walk where you don't have bad eyes, like you walked where the rain wasn't ... and leave the tumors in that other place? Could you walk where you have good eyes and come back with them?" Copyright (c) 1999 by Ursula K. Le Guin. "Dragonfly" first appeared in *Legends*. From time to time, he halted, leaning against the walker as if in need of rest. He took care occasionally to grimace convincingly, not too theatrically---and to breathe harder than necessary. Only madmen were capable of such butchery. Hopeless lunatics like Ed Gein, out there in Wisconsin, arrested just seven years ago, when Junior had been sixteen. Ed, the inspiration for Psycho, had constructed mobiles out of human noses and lips. He used human skin to make lampshades and to upholster furniture. His soup bowls had once been human skulls. He ate the hearts and selected other organs of his victims, wore a belt fashioned from nipples, and occasionally danced under the moon while masked by the scalp and face of a woman he had murdered. "Three hundred and ninety-six of the dead were children under the age of ten," Jacob continued. "A passenger train was tumbled off the tracks, killing twenty. Another train with tank cars got smashed around, and oil spilled across the flood waters, ignited, and all these people clinging to floating debris were surrounded by flames, no way to escape. Their choice was being burned alive or drowning." Stepping forward lightly, lightly, as he swung the candlestick, Junior saw the dinner guest stiffen, perhaps sensing danger or at least movement, but it was too late. The guy didn't even have time to turn his head or duck. "I should," Tom agreed, "but the point is this. . ." With the finesse of a magician, he allowed the salt shaker to slip out of the concealment of his palm, and stood it beside the pepper. "This is also me." At the mention of her son's name, Agnes stiffened. There were numerous ways for Deed to have learned the baby's name, yet it seemed wrong for him to know it, wrong to use it, the name of this child he had nearly orphaned, had almost killed. When he returned to the kitchen to add ice and sherry to his glass, he looked up White, Celestina in the San Francisco phone directory. Her number was listed; her address was not. Tom was aware that something had happened here during the past week, an important development that Celestina mentioned on the phone but that she declined to discuss. He didn't harbor any expectations of what he'd find when she escorted him and Wally into the Lampion dining room, but if he'd tried to imagine the scene awaiting him, he wouldn't have pictured a s'ance. By Friday morning, September 10, little more than forty-eight hours after the shooting, he felt good and was in fine spirits. 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. Maybes are for babies, Zedd tells us in *Act Now, Think Later. Learning to Trust Your Instincts*. First he tore two paper towels from a wall-mounted dispenser and held one in each hand, as makeshift gloves. He was determined to leave no fingerprints. Paul said, "I wanted you ... I don't know ... I just wanted you to see her. I wanted to say ... to say. . ." Casey and Tutti, her sister Skipper, and dreamboat Ken--and soon the girls had Barty enthusiastically involved in a make-believe world far different from the one in which Heinlein's teenage lead owned an extraordinary alien pet with eight legs, the temperament of a kitten, and an appetite for everything from grizzly bears to Buicks. Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Le Guin, Ursula K., 1929-. Yet, with no recollection of rising from his chair, he found that he had shouldered his backpack and crossed the room. The three men looked up expectantly. Glorifying in the cloudless day and the warmer than usual weather, he drove seventy miles north, through phalanxes of evergreens that marched down the steep hills to the scenic coast. All the way, he monitored the traffic in his rearview mirror. No one followed him. Clenching his right hand around the quarter, waving left hand over right, he intoned, "Jingle-jangle, mingle-jingle." Opening his right hand, he revealed that the coin had vanished. Junior found the acclaim gratifying, but the widespread use of his photograph was a high price to pay even for the recognition of his contribution to art. Fortunately, with his bald head and pocked face, he no longer resembled the Enoch Cain for whom the authorities were searching. And they believed that the bandages on his face, at

the church, had been merely an exotic disguise. One psychologist even speculated that the bandages had been an expression of the guilt and shame he felt on a subconscious level. Yeah, right..Ministering to Perri, Joshua had pulled back her blankets. The fabric of the pale yellow pajama pants couldn't disguise how terribly withered her legs were: two sticks..He would never allow himself to be bankrupted and made poor again. Never. His fortune had been won at enormous risk, with great fortitude and determination. He must defend it at any cost..Thunder less distant now. Around her-the crackle of police radios, the clang of tools being readied, the skirl of a stiffening wind. Dizzying, these sounds. She couldn't shut her ears against them, and when she closed her eyes, she felt as though she were spinning..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.. "Better hold on tight to her," Wally warned Celestina, braking to a halt at the intersection. "She'll float up and away, then we'll have to call the fire department to get her down."..The singular beauty of San Francisco and the exquisite patina of its colorful history spoke to her heart and kindled in her such an unreasonable passion that she sometimes wondered, at least half seriously, if she had spent other lives here. Often, streets were wondrously familiar to her the first time that she set foot on them. Certain great houses, dating from the late 1800s and early 1900s, inspired her to imagine elegant parties thrown."What aren't you telling us?" her mother pressed, intuiting the existence of a larger story, if not the amazing nature of it..With some sharp instrument, probably a knife, Cain had stabbed and gouged the red letters, working on the wall with such fury that two of the Bartholomews were barely readable anymore. The Sheetrock was marked by hundreds of scores and punctures..In the years since I began to write about Earthsea I've changed, of course, and so have the people who read the books. All times are changing times, but ours is one of massive, rapid moral and mental transformation. Archetypes turn into millstones, large simplicities get complicated, chaos becomes elegant, and what everybody knows is true turns out to be what some people used to think..He would have done it, too, and risked establishing a pattern that police might notice; but the still, small voice of Zedd guided him now, as so often before, and counseled calm, counseled focus..On one wall hung an impressive array of gardening tools. In the corner was a potting bench..During the past week, Junior had undertaken quiet background research on the prestidigitator with a badge. The cop was unmarried. He lived alone, so this bold visit entailed no risk..being careful to place the point of impact precisely where the bottle had struck her..He knew that the only movement in those staring, sightless eyes was the restless reflection of the flashlight beam as he probed the trash with it. He knew he was being irrational, but nevertheless he was reluctant to turn his back on the corpse. Repeatedly in the midst of searching, he snapped his head up, whipping his attention to Neddy, certain that from the corner of his eye, he had seen the dead gaze following him..Into new avenues of the labyrinth he moved, but then back again, back upon his own trail, twisting, turning, from the occult to modern literature, from history to popular science, and here the occult once more, always the shadow glimpsed so fleetingly and so peripherally that it might have been imagination, the scent of a woman no sooner detected than lost again in the perfumes of aging paper and bindery glue, twisting, turning, until abruptly he stopped, breathing hard, halted by the realization that he hadn't heard the singing in some time.."I suspect," Tom said, "that any job you set your mind to, you'd be as good as you are at teeth."..And speak the tongues of man and drake..To achieve certain narrative effects, I've fiddled slightly with the floor plan and the interior design of St. Mary's Hospital in San Francisco. In this story, the characters who work at St. Mary's are fictional and are not modeled after anyone on the staff of that excellent institution, either past or present..Although the ace of hearts had only positive meanings, and although, according to Maria, multiple appearances, especially in sequence, meant increasingly positive things, a series of chills nevertheless riffled through Agnes's spine, as if her vertebrae were fingers shuffling..Both angry and mortified, yet still fearful, a walking multimedia collage of emotions, Junior left the gallery..In his seventies but vigorous and full of fun, Sparky liked to take an occasional jaunt to Reno, to pump the slot machines and try a few hands of blackjack. The off-the-record, tax-free monthly checks from Simon were gratefully received, ensuring the old man's cooperation with the conspiracy..Entering the bedroom, Junior had expected to cast aside his pistol and draw a knife. But he was no longer in a mood for close-up work. Fortunately, he'd managed to hold on to the gun..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..The little hands, so weak now but someday strong: Would they eventually be capable of savagery, as were the father's hands? Misbegotten offspring. This seed of a demonic man whom Phimie herself had called sick and evil. However innocent-looking now, what pain might she eventually in-- on others? What outrages might she commit in years to come? Although Celestina searched intently, she could not glimpse the father's evil in the child..Kathleen hadn't noticed Tom replace his glass on the table, over the quarter. When he lifted it to drain the last of the martini, two dimes and a nickel glittered on the tablecloth, where previously the quarter had been..Holding hands, Barty and Angel led the adults into the kitchen, to the back door. This procession had a ceremonial quality that intrigued Tom, and by the time they stepped onto the porch, he was impatient to know why everyone--except he and Wally--was emotionally airborne, one degree of altitude below euphoria..After mentally reviewing what he must say, after working up a nervous edge, he dialed the SFPD emergency number..She told him to stay on the line, stay on no matter what, told him to keep talking to her, and he hung up..What good was she to anybody, what good could she ever hope to be, if she couldn't even save her little sister?.She shook her head, and red bows fluttered. "No. 'Cause you didn't just move it around."..With a paper towel, Junior wiped the revolver. He dropped it on the floor beside the riddled nurse.."She. Was eating. Dried apricots." Junior spoke almost in a whisper yet the ridge was

so quiet that he had no doubt each of these uniformed but unofficial jurors heard him clearly. "Walking. Around the deck. Paused. The view. She. She. She leaned. Gone." "I'd give anything if it hadn't happened," he said earnestly. And now a tortured note wrung wet emotion from his voice "I only wish it had been me who died." Although Thomas Vanadium was unconscious, perhaps even dead, and though both nailhead-gray eyes were closed, Junior knew those eyes were watching him, watching through the lids..He wanted, all right, but -intuition warned him that he ought to continue to be discreet for a while longer.."No, no. But being around him so much, inevitably I absorb some details. He's a compelling speaker when the subject interests him." "There's a fine George and Ira Gershwin song called 'Someone to Watch Over Me.' Junior would have liked to pursue spiritual matters with Sklent, but numerous other partyers wanted their time with the great man. In parting, sure that he would give the artist a laugh, Junior withdrew the brochure for "This Momentous Day" from his jacket and coyly asked for an opinion of Celestina White's paintings..Barty had never been instructed in the rules of grammar, but had absorbed them as the roots of Edom's roses absorbed nutrients. "Sure. Does and is." He considered himself to be a thoroughly useless man, taking up space in a world to which he contributed nothing, but he did have a talent for baking. He could take any recipe, even one from a world-class pastry chef, and improve upon it..He didn't want to risk marrying weapon and silencer here in the hall, where he might be seen. Besides, complications could arise from being splattered with Neddy's blood. Aftermath was disgusting, but it was also highly incriminating. For the same reason, he was loath to use a knife..All he cared about was Red Planet, and what might happen after page 103. He had carried the book with him to the doctor's office, and on the way home in the car; he repeatedly opened it, squinting at the lines of type, trying to read around or through the "twisty" spots. "Jim and Frank and Willis, they're in deep trouble." One of the coin seekers knocked against Junior, jarring him loose of his paralysis, but when he stumbled out of the line of fire of the second vending machine, a third machine shot quarters at him..Her voice was flat and a little hard. Another man might have mistaken her tone for disapproval, for impatience, even for quiet anger..As if a door had briefly opened between this windless day and another world, a single gust rattled rain against the windows..The young man raised his voice to be heard above the gobbling of the art turkeys. "No, sir. He just asked where the men's room was." BARTY TODDLED, Barty walked, and ultimately Barty carried a pie for his mother on one of her delivery days, wary of his balance and solemn with responsibility..To his room then, where they sat side by side in bed, a plate of chocolate-chip cookies between them. Through the evening, they stepped off this earth and out of all its troubles, into a world of adventure, where friendship and loyalty and courage and honor could deal with any malignancy..of drool. Her eyes rolled, wild with fear, and seemed not to be focused on anything. Although, by unspoken agreement, they avoided any talk of loss and death, the mood remained grim. Angel sat in thoughtful silence, pushing her food around her plate rather than eating it. Her demeanor intrigued Tom, and he noticed that it worried her mother, who put a different interpretation on it than he did..Otter was reluctant to answer. He had to like Hound, but didn't have to trust him. "Shape-changing," he mumbled at last..Magically, a shiny quarter appeared in Thomas Vanadium's right hand. It turned end over end, knuckle to knuckle, disappeared between thumb and forefinger, and reappeared at the little finger, beginning its cross-hand journey once more..The afternoon was winding down, and the lowering sky seemed to be drawn steadily toward the earth by threads of gray light that reeled westward, ever faster, over the horizon's spool. The air smelled like rain waiting to happen..A music tradition was deeply rooted in the Negro community. No similar tradition in magic existed..Nothing he could do about it now. Having Naomi's body moved to another grave, in a cemetery without Negroes, would cause a lot of talk. He didn't want to draw more attention to himself..The subcontractor who built the quarter-spitting coin boxes was James Hunnicolt, but everyone called him Jimmy Gadget. He specialized in electronic eavesdropping, building cameras and recorders into the most unlikely objects, but he could do just about anything requiring inventive mechanical design and construction..Neddy occupied the entire spacious fourth floor of the house. The third and second floors were each divided into two apartments, the ground floor into four studio units, all of which he rented out.."Of all the things I might be meant to do with my life," he told Agnes, "I believe nothing will matter more than the small part I've had in bringing together these two children." 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..ON THE FOLLOWING Tuesday afternoon in Bright Beach, across a sky as black as a witch's cauldron, seagulls flew out of an evil brew toward their safe roosts, and on the land below, humid shadows of the..To be fair, with her exceptional beauty, she would have been the center of attention even in a gathering of real artists. Junior had little chance of getting at Seraphim's bastard boy without going through this woman and killing her as well; but if his luck held and he could eliminate Bartholomew without Celestina realizing who had done the deed, then he might yet have a chance to discover if she was as lubricious as her sister and if she was his heart mate..These Spartan arrangements were good enough for Vanadium. He had arrived from Oregon the previous night with three suitcases full of his clothes and personal effects. He expected that his unique combination of detective work and psychological warfare would enable him to entrap Cain in a month, before these accommodations began to feel too austere even for one to whom anything fancier than a monk's cell could seem baroque..Although he related well to the theme of moral relativism and personal autonomy in a value-neutral world, Junior grew apprehensive about each impending scene of violence, and closed his eyes against the prospect of blood. He resented having to endure ninety minutes of the film before Google finally settled into the seat beside him..Reflections of those tracks appeared as stigmatic tears on the long face of the physician.."I've got one of those faces so ordinary you see it everywhere," said Edom, and decided to tell the story of the Tri-State Tornado of 1925..During the ten days since Joey's passing, a great many people had conveyed their condolences to Agnes, but until this man, she'd known all of them..He looked up into the eyes of the stocky man with the birthmark. They were

gray eyes, hard as nail heads, but clear and surprisingly beautiful in that otherwise unfortunate face..So runs the water away, away..Unsupervised meditation without seed, in sessions longer than an hour, entails risk. To his horror, Junior would discover some of the dangers in September..This surprised him. Of course, Oregon was not the Deep South. It was a progressive state. Nevertheless, he was surprised. Oregon wasn't home to many Negroes, either, a handful compared to those in other states, and yet until now Junior supposed that they had their own cemeteries..With her brothers, she adjourned to the waiting room, where the three of them sat drinking vending-machine coffee, black, from paper cups..In a minute or two, one of the cops returned, crouching close as the medics worked. "There's no intruder..".As beautiful as they were, none of these women satisfied him as profoundly as Naomi had satisfied him..Joey was standing just outside, gazing in at her. His blue eyes were seas where sorrow sailed..Paul was nearest to that corner when he halted Grace in her rush toward certain death. Before he quite realized what he was doing, he found that he'd flung open the door and climbed half the single long flight of steps, as surefooted as Doc Savage or the Saint, or the Whistler, or any of the other pulp-fiction heroes whose exploits had for so long been his adventures by proxy..Suddenly and seriously crept out, Junior wanted to get away from this nut case. Yet he was frozen by morbid fascination..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..The gray pants of her jogging suit, speckled with rain that had blown in through the shattered windshield, were suddenly soaked. Her water had broken..He was uncomfortable, achy, thirsty, but he remained utterly still and observant. After a while, he realized that the sense of oppression with which he'd awakened was not entirely a psychological symptom: Something heavy lay across his abdomen. And it was cold-so cold, in fact, that it had numbed his middle to the extent that he hadn't immediately felt the chill of it. Shivers coursed through him. He clenched his jaws to prevent his teeth from chattering and thereby alerting the man in the chair. Although he never took his eyes off the corner, Junior became preoccupied with trying to puzzle out what was draped across his midsection. The mysterious observer made him sufficiently nervous that he couldn't order his thoughts as well as usual, and the effort to prevent the shivers from shaking a sound out of him only further interfered with his ability to reason. The longer that he was unable to identify the frigid object, the more alarmed he became. He almost cried out when into his mind oozed an image of Naomi's dead body, now past the whitest shade of pale, as gray as the faint light at the window and turning pale green in a few places, and cold, all the heat of life gone from her flesh, which was not yet simmering with any of the heat of decomposition that would soon enliven it again..With great deliberation, Joey shifted gears and followed the drive way to the street, where he peered left and then right with the squint-eyed suspicion of a Marine commando scouting dangerous territory. He turned right..Although only half the stools at the counter were occupied, and none of those close to Junior, customers were seated in most of the booths. Some had their backs to him, and three were about Vanadium's size.. "Usually, I throw out a bunch of hocus-pocus, flourishes and patter, to distract people, so they don't even realize that what they've seen was real. They think the midair disappearance is just a trick..".Under a declining moon, he fled discreetly three blocks to his Suburban, parked on a parallel street. He encountered no traffic, and on the way, he stripped off the gardening gloves and discarded them in a Dumpster at a house undergoing remodeling..In recounting the fortune-telling session, Agnes had not told the magician about the four jacks of spades, only about the aces of diamonds and hearts. She never wore her worries for anyone to see; and though she had made a joke of the appearance of the fourth knave on Friday, Edom knew that it had deeply troubled her..Agnes, Celestina, and Grace were soon working together with a harmony that was kitchen poetry. Paul had noticed that most women seemed to like or dislike one another within a minute of their first encounter, and when they found one another companionable, they were as open and easy on their first meeting as though they were friends of long duration. Within half an hour, these three sounded as if they were of one age, inseparable since childhood. He had not seen Grace or Celestina free of despair since the reverend's murder, but here they were able for the first time to veil their anguish in the bustle of baking and the pleasure of making a new friend..Junior glimpsed Vanadium first in profile-and then, as the cop rode down and away, only the back of his head. He hadn't seen this man in almost three years, yet he was instantly certain that this was no coincidental look-alike. Here went the filthy-scabby-monkey spirit itself..He planned, as soon as they took him out of his cell, to use the old Changers spell of self-transformation and so escape. Surely his life was in danger, and it would be all right to use the spell? Only he couldn't decide what to turn himself into-a bird, or a wisp of smoke, what would be safest? But while he was thinking about it, Losen's men, used to wizard's tricks, drugged his food and he ceased to think of anything at all. They dumped him into a mule-cart like a sack of oats. When he showed signs of reviving during the journey, one of them bashed him on the head, remarking that he wanted to make sure he got his rest..By the first of November, they moved his mother's bed into the living room, so she could be in the center of things, where always she had been, though they admitted no guests now, only members of their family with its many names..Ashamed and scared, she told no one. Although a victim, she blamed herself, and the prospect of being exposed to ridicule so horrified her that despair got the better of good judgment..Their apartment was in a four-story Victorian house that dripped gingerbread, in the exclusive Pacific Heights district. It had been converted to apartments with deep respect for the architecture, years before Wally bought it..EARTHSEA.open grave. In his hand: the white rose, its thorns slick with his blood. He dropped the bloom, and it fell out of sight, into the gaping earth, atop Naomi's casket..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..For a while, she couldn't get enough air. Felt suffocated. She drew great, raw, shuddering breaths, and thought that she would never be able

to quiet herself but quiet came..He doubted that the singer had been Victoria Bressler, dead nurse, but he believed this was the same voice he'd heard on the telephone, back on the twenty-fifth of June, when someone purporting to be Victoria had called with an urgent warning for Bartholomew.."I mean it. You have a lot of responsibilities here. Barty. Pie Lady Services. People who depend on you. Friends who love you. When you came on board with me, mister, you bought into a whole lot more than you can walk away from."Losen, a sea-pirate who called himself King of the Inmost Sea, was then the chief warlord in the city and all the east and south of Havnor. Exacting tribute from that rich domain, he spent it to increase his soldiery and the fleets he sent out to take slaves and plunder from other lands. As Otters uncle said, he kept the shipwrights busy. They were grateful to have work in a time when men seeking work found only beggary, and rats ran in the courts of Maharion. They did an honest job, Otter's father said, and what the work was used for was none of their concern..In July 1967, at two and a half, he finally contracted his first cold, an off-season virus with a mean bite. His throat was sore, but he didn't fuss or even complain. He swallowed his medicine without resistance, and though he rested occasionally, he played with toys and paged through picture books with as much pleasure as ever..than the crows. Tumbled on the grass, in fragments: the broken trophy for the prize rose, the symbol of his sinful.On a street a half mile from the airport in Eugene, he sat in the parked Dodge long enough to gingerly unwind the bandages and use a tissue to wipe off the pungent but useless salve he'd purchased at a pharmacy. Although he pressed the Kleenex to his face so gently that the pressure might not have broken the surface tension on a pool of water, the agony of the touch was so great that he nearly passed out. The rearview mirror revealed clusters of hideous, large, red knobs with glistening yellow heads, and at the sight of himself, he actually did pass out for a minute or two, just long enough to dream that he was a grotesque but misunderstood creature being pursued through a stormy night by crowds of angry villagers with torches and pitchforks, but then the throbbing agony revived him..Nevertheless, Junior was thrilled to hear the name Bartholomew, and to know that the boy of whom Celestina spoke was the Bartholomew of Bartholomews, the menacing presence in his unremembered dream, the threat to his fortune and future that must be eliminated..Sudden rain spared her the need to finish the sentence. A few fat drops drew both their faces to the sky, and even as they rose to their feet, this brief light paradiddle of sprinkles gave way to a serious drumming..His throat was still so raw from the explosive vomiting, seared by stomach acid, that he sounded like a character from a puppet show for children on Saturday-morning television, hoarse and squeaky at the same time. If not for the pain, he would have felt ridiculous, but the hot and jagged scrape of each word through his throat left him unable to