

ELECTRONIC MEETING SYSTEM STANDARD REQUIREMENTS

When Nolly sighed and frowned, his lumpish face seemed in danger of sliding off his skull, like oatmeal oozing off a spoon. "Mr. Cain, much as I regret it, I'm afraid I'm going to have to return half of the retainer you gave me." Barty's mathematical genius proved to have a valuable practical application. Even in his blindness, he perceived patterns where those with sight did not. Working with Tom Vanadium, he devised strikingly successful investment strategies based on subtleties of the stock market's historical performance. By the 1980s, the foundation's annual return on its endowment averaged twenty-six percent: excellent in light of the fact that the runaway inflation of the 1970s had been curbed. Kathleen watched him with obvious amusement, aware that he was savoring her suspense as much as he was the appetizer. In his head, without apparent effort, Barty kept a running total of the number of seconds that he had been alive, and of the number of words in every book that he read. Agnes never checked his word totals for an entire volume; however, when she cited any page in a book that he'd just finished, he knew the number of words it contained. "Worlds," ventured Jacob, "in which that oil-tank truck never stopped on the railroad tracks in Bakersfield, back in '60. So the train never crashed into it and those seventeen people never died." "Money's no object. I can afford whatever you'd like to charge. And I'd be a diligent student." "From 1604 through 1610, Erzebet Bathory, sister of the Polish king, with the assistance of her servants, tortured and killed six hundred girls. She bit them, drank their blood, tore their faces off with tongs, mutilated their private parts, and mocked their screams." Instinctively, he knew he should not give massages to Negroes. He sensed that somehow he would be physically or morally polluted by this contact. Aftermath was not important. Only movement mattered. Just forget the busload of nuns smashed on the tracks, and stay with the onrushing train. Keep moving, looking forward, always forward. Finally sleeping, he had anxiety dreams of being in a public rest room, overcome by urgent need, only to find that every stall was occupied by someone he had killed, all of them vengefully determined to deny him a chance for dignified relief. "My scar," he confessed, "is inexperience. For a man my age, Agnes, I'm in some ways unbelievably innocent. I wouldn't trade the years with Perri for anything or anyone, but intense as it was, our love didn't include ... Well, I mean, you may find me inadequate." Celestina often thought of his wife and twin boys--Rowena, Danny, and Harry--dead in that airliner crash six years ago, and sometimes she was pierced by a sense of loss so poignant that they might have been members of her own family. She grieved as much over their loss of Wally as over his loss of them, and as blasphemous as the thought might be, she wondered why God had been so cruel as to sunder such a family. Rowena, Danny, and Harry had crossed all waters of suffering and lived now eternally in the kingdom. One day they would all be rejoined with the special husband and father they had lost; but even the reward of Heaven seemed inadequate compensation for being denied so many years here on earth with a man as good and kind and big of heart as Walter Lipscomb. This was the image that plied the turbulent waters of Junior Cain's imagination when he sailed out of the driver's door and came around to face the Studebaker, his heart dropping like an anchor. "When you called earlier in the year, to ask for a referral to a private investigator down there, the woman had recently turned up dead and Vanadium was gone, but no one put the two together at first." He briefly considered playing dumb, but he knew she was too smart for that. "Gunsmoke, you mean. Listen, I know you'll do whatever's necessary to keep Angel safe, because you love her so much. Love will give. Without excellence, of course, there would be no civilization, no progress, no joy; and Agnes was surprised that this sharp burr of her father's philosophy had stuck deep in her subconscious, prickling and worrying her unnecessarily. She'd thought that she was entirely clean of his influence. 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. "That's right," Celestina told Wally. "This isn't wagering. What's wrong with you?" Having been so wounded by one death, Celestina could not imagine how Lipscomb could have survived the loss of his entire family. Pity knotted her heart and cinched her throat so that she spoke in little more than a whisper: "Was that the American Airlines. . ." The slow-motion death ballet, in which Bonnie and Clyde were riddled with bullets, was the worst moment Junior had ever heard in a film. He didn't see more than a brief glimpse of it, because he sat with his eyes squeezed shut. Nine days previously, at Google's instructions, Junior had rented boxes at two mail-receiving services, using the name John Pinchbeck at one, Richard Gammoner at the other, and then he had supplied those addresses to the papermaker. These were the two identities for which Google ultimately provided elaborate and convincing documentation. Barty, she explained, would be rich in many ways. Financially rich, but also rich in talent, in spirit, intellect. Rich in courage, honor. With a wealth of common sense, good judgment, and luck. He hadn't lied to his mother. She assumed that by some quantum magic, he had regained his sight permanently, and that this came with no cost. He merely allowed her to go to her rest with the comforting misapprehension that her son had been freed from darkness. The paramedic, fingers pressed to the radial artery in Junior's right wrist, must have felt a rocket-quick acceleration in his pulse rate. Glancing at the plump pie in Edom's hands, the gentleman replied to Agnes in a musical yet gravelly voice worthy of Louis Armstrong: "You must be the lady Reverend Collins told me about." twenty-eight pounds. Typically, seven to eight pounds of this is the fetus. The placenta and the amniotic fluid weigh three pounds. The remaining eighteen are due to water retention and fat stores. Angel followed him and observed as he climbed a stepstool and unhooked the telephone handset. He dialed with little pause between digits, and spoke with each of his uncles. Cain's Spruce Hills home, which he'd shared with Naomi, hadn't been furnished anything like this. The difference between there and here--and the similarity to Vanadium's digs--could be explained neither by wealth alone nor by a change of taste arising from the experience of city life. He switched off the flashlight and stood solemnly for a moment, paying his respects to Seraphim. She had

been so sweet, so innocent, so supple, so exquisitely proportioned..She shook her head. "No way back." She pointed to the sketch pad on the floor. "I pushed him there."..After the stupid bastards read a newspaper or smoked a few cigarettes, they finally broke down the door. Satisfyingly dramatic: the crack of splintering wood, the crash.."Cash," Junior said. "I'll pay cash, with whatever amount of deposit is required."..AGNES ALWAYS ENJOYED Christmas Eve dinner with Edom and Jacob, because even they tempered their pessimism on this night of nights. Whether the season touched their hearts or they wanted even more than usual to please their sister, she didn't know. If gentle Edom spoke of killer tornadoes or if dear Jacob was reminded of massive explosions, each dwelt not on horrible death, as usual, but on feats of courage in the midst of dire catastrophe, recounting astonishing rescues and miraculous escapes.."Frozen firing pin," Cain said. His smile was venomous. "I worked on it. I hoped you'd get here in time to see the consequences of your stupid games."..He pushed back the bedclothes and sat up, leaning against the pillows and headboard. "This is maybe a hard thing for you to do, but it's really important."..Bright though they were at all times, Barty's Tiffany eyes shone brighter now with beams of North Pole magic. "Maybe I do feel it."..She lost track of him. Fear knocked, knocked, on the door of her heart, because she was sure that he had vanished the way ships supposedly disappeared in the Bermuda Triangle..With every step through the long night walk, Paul had considered what he would say, must say, if this encounter ever took place. Now all his practiced words deserted him..Hers were the most feminine hands he'd ever seen. Slender, soft, prettier than Naomi's. He had no idea what she was talking about..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..Putting an arm around Paul's shoulders, Dr. Salk walked with him along a street lined with eucalyptuses and Torrey pines, to a nearby pocket park. They sat on a bench in the sunshine and watched duck waddle on the shore of a man-made pond..She worried that he would need to go to the bathroom during the night and that, half asleep, he might turn the wrong way, toward the stairs, and fall. Three times they paced off the route from the doorway of his room to the hall bath. She would have walked it a hundred times and still not been satisfied, but Barty said, "Okay, I've got it."..A dry laugh escaped the detective, but it had none of the warmth of most people's laughter. "You're not bad, Enoch. You're just not as good as you think you are."..And suddenly Celestina believed that Bellini was a cop, not because his voice contained such authority, but because her heart told her that the time had come, that the long-anticipated danger had at last materialized: the dark advent that Phimie had warned her about three years ago..She dealt with them equally, too, favoring neither-except in-the matter of pie delivery. On those rare occasions when she could not make these rounds herself and when she had no one to turn to but a brother, Agnes always asked for Edom's help..A matronly nurse arrived, alerted to the patient's return to consciousness by the telemetry device associated with the heart monitor..And the mills of capitalism provide them. Supply meets demand. Fantasy becomes a commodity, an industry..Lord, listen to me-but I've really got to know if you can, if you are, how you feel, whether you feel, I mean, whether you think you could feel--".In the dark woods of the dream, still the presence: faceless and silent, radiating a merciless intent..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..The crazy bitch wielded it with such ferocity that the force of the impact with the floor, rebounding upon her, must have numbed her arms. She stumbled backward, dragging the chair, temporarily unable to lift it..WEDNESDAY, fully two days after delivering honey-raisin pear pies with Agnes, Edom worked up the nerve to visit Jacob..A man came out of the stone tower. He passed them, walking hurriedly with a queer shambling gait, staring straight ahead. His chin shone and his chest was wet with spittle leaking from his lips..No one had actually been here. And he still didn't believe in ghosts, so he didn't think that a spirit had been wandering his home in his absence..If Agnes knew that Jacob had been helping her game, she might never play cards with him again. She would not approve of what he had done. Consequently, his great skill as a card mechanic must be forever his secret..Already another contraction racked her, so intense that the pain was not limited to her lower back and abdomen, but seared the length of her spine, like an electric current leaping vertebra to vertebra. Her breath pinched in her chest as though her lungs had collapsed..The big-headed, bulging-eyed, slit-mouthed runt had collected \$850,000 from Naomi's death, so the least he could do was provide a little information. He'd probably bill for the time, anyway.."Some men," she said, "wouldn't be able to sustain desire when their hands touched my back. I'll understand if you're one of them. It's not beautiful to the eye, and rough as oak bark to the touch. That's why I brought you here, so you'd know this before you consider where you want to go from ... where we are now."..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.."I didn't know it myself till I realized I was right in your neighborhood. I assumed your mother and Angel would be here, and I hoped you might be. If I'm intruding-".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..Lord, help me here. Give me this one, just this one, and I'll follow thereafter where I'm led. I'll always thereafter be your instrument, but please, please, GIVE ME THIS CRAZY EVIL SON OF A BITCH!.Three and a half days had passed since he'd pushed his wife off

the tower, and in that time he'd had no real fun. He was gregarious by nature, never one to turn down a party invitation. He liked to laugh, to love, to live, but he couldn't enjoy life when he must remember at all times to appear bereft and to keep sorrow in his voice..Junior was at critical depth. The psychological pressure was at least five thousand pounds per square inch and growing by the second. Implosion imminent..Otter shook his head..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.. "Toes," he repeated immediately in his sweet, piping voice. This was a new word for him.. "My dad's already armored me," Celestina assured her. "He says art lasts, but critics are the buzzing insects of a single summer day." Ten months later, Simon called again, also regarding Cain, but this time the attorney was the client, and Cain was the target. What Simon wanted Nolly to do was strange, to say the least, and it could be construed as harassment, but none of it was exactly illegal. And for two years, beginning with the quarter in the cheeseburger, ending with the coin-spitting machines, all of it had been great fun..Room to room through the upstairs. Checking closets. Behind furniture. Bathrooms. In Paul's private spaces. No Cain..surreptitiously with Junior. He was accustomed to being an object of desire. This night, however, the only lady he cared about was San Francisco herself, and he wanted to be alone with her..The corroded casement-operating mechanism began to give way, as did the hinges, and the window sagged outward.. "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." Reaching between the slats, Agnes tickled the pink piggies on his left foot. "Toes." Using a three-step folding stool, he was able to get near enough to one of the vent plates in the living room to determine whether it might be the source of the song. just then the singing stopped..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..able to reconcile these opposed forces, she was all but paralyzed by indecision..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.. "All right. Well ... Jesuits are encouraged to pursue education in any subject that interests them, not theology alone. I was deeply interested in physics." "Not only coal miners. Old as you are in some ways, you're still too young for me to explain. I will someday." WHEN A GLASS OF chilled apple juice at dawn stayed on his stomach, Junior Cain was allowed a second glass, though he was admonished He was also given three saltines..A nurse fussed over him as she helped him into bed, concerned about his paleness and his tremors. She was attentive, efficient, compassionate but she wasn't in the least attractive, and he wished she would..She could see now what she hadn't seen when running with him through the cemetery, because she was looking directly at him. Yet even seeing did not make it easy to believe..In agreement, Maria pushed the stack of unused cards aside, and she peered at her hands as if she wanted to scrub them for a long time under hot water..As always in uncertainty, she asked herself what her mother would do in this situation. Grace, of infinite grace, unfailingly did precisely the needed thing, knew exactly the right words to console, to enlighten, to charm a smile out of even the miserable. Often, however, the needed thing involved no words, because in our journey we so often feel abandoned, and we need only to be reassured that we are not alone..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..The two bereaved women huddled at one end of the living room, tearful, touching, talking quietly, wondering together if there was any way that each could help the other to fill this sudden, deep, and terrible hole in their lives..He produced her coat as if by legerdemain. Magically, she found her arms in the sleeves and the collar around her neck, though given her size lately, putting on anything other than a hat usually required strategy and persistence..Her first year at college, she had hoped only to be able one day to earn a living as an illustrator for magazines or on the staff of an advertising agency. A career in the fine arts, of course, was every painter's fantasy, the full freedom to explore her talent; but she would have been grateful for the realization of a much humbler dream. Now, she was just twenty-three, and the world hung before her like a ripe plum, and she seemed able to reach high enough to pluck it off the branch..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..Inexplicably, each repetition of Bartholomew heightened Junior's anxiety. The name resonated not just in his ear, but in his blood and bones, in body and mind, as if he were a great bronze bell and Bartholomew the clapper..Agnes discovered that watching her child be totally consumed by a new enthusiasm was an unparalleled delight. Through Barty, she had a tantalizing sense of what her own childhood might have been like if her father had allowed her to have one, and at times, listening to the boy exclaim about the space-faring Stone family or about the mysteries of Mars, she discovered that at least some part of a child still lived within her, untouched by either cruelty or time.. "That's obvious to us, but not always to others. Apparently, this would have been some years ago." Room by room, closet by closet, Junior conducted a search for the detective. The cop was not here..As the fragrances of wet wool and sodden denim rose from her sweater and jeans, Agnes switched on the heater and angled the vanes of the middle vent toward Barty. "Honey, turn that other vent toward yourself." He stared I out at the congregated ghosts of fog, white multitudes that entirely obscured the bay, as if all the sailors ever lost at sea had gathered here, pressing at the window, eyeless forms that nevertheless saw everything..He closed his eyes again and seemed asleep, but then as she clicked off the lamp, he

murmured, "You have your halo again." Saturday morning, Paul made himself useful by assisting Grace with food preparation and by setting out the plates, flatware, and glasses on the dining-room sideboard. Junior couldn't leave the dead man in the hall and hope to have any quality time with Celestina. 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. As "It is." From a desk drawer, Nolly withdrew an envelope and put it on top of the offered cash. "I'm returning five hundred of your thousand retainer." He pushed everything back toward Junior. After adjusting the hairpin that held her lace mantilla, Maria passed from the narthex into the nave. She dipped two fingers in the holy water that glimmered in the marble font, and crossed herself. "Apple juice, lime Jell-O, and four soda crackers," said the detective. "If you don't have enough of a conscience to make you confess, Angel was lying on a towel on the convertible sofa, where Grace had just changed her diaper. She sat at the kitchen table, staring at the glass. After a while she emptied it in the sink without having taken a sip. "But the breed is nervous, dear. With a nervous breed, you just never know, do you? The walls were barren. The only art in these rooms was a single sculpture. Junior was taking university extension courses in art appreciation and almost daily haunting the city's countless galleries, constantly deepening and refining his knowledge. He intended to refrain from acquiring a collection until he was as expert on the subject as any director of any museum in the city. Throughout lunch and, indeed, during his hours as an outpatient at the hospital, Barty gave no indication that he understood the gravity of his situation. He remained cheerful, charming the doctors and technicians with his sweet personality and precocious chatter. "Sure. Or why don't I pull a Rumpelstiltskin and demand one of her children for payment". The stump was capped at the end of the internal cuneiform, depriving Junior of everything from the metatarsal to the tip of the toe. He was delighted with this result, because successful reattachment would have been a calamity. On this morning in March, minutes after the pie caravan had departed, Edom got his Ford Country Squire out of the garage and drove to the nursery, which opened early. Spring was drawing near, and much work needed to be done to make the most of the rosarium that Joey Lampion had encouraged him to restore. He happily contemplated hours of browsing through plant stock, tools, and gardening supplies. Having shuffled all four stacks of cards, Jacob cut two decks and shuffled the halves together, controlling them exactly as he had controlled them on Friday evening. Then the other two halves. A SEVERE THIRST INDICATED to Agnes that she wasn't dead. There would be no thirst in paradise. He lay still, waiting for silence to return, so he could hear whether the great gong had drawn people into the alley. He supposed Victoria might have a visitor. Perhaps a relative or a girlfriend. Not a man. No. She knew who her man was, and she would have no other while she waited for the chance to surrender to him and to consummate the relationship that had begun with the spoon and the ice in the hospital ten days previously. He knew what she made of it, all right, and he could see that the others on the porch knew as well, and likewise he could see that all of them wanted to hear him confirm the conclusion at which Agnes had arrived long before he'd come here with Wally this evening. Even in the dining room, before the proof in the rain, Tom had recognized the special bond between the blind boy and this buoyant little girl. In fact, he couldn't have arrived at any conclusion different from the one Agnes reached, because like her, he believed that the events of every day revealed mysterious design if you were willing to see it, that every fife had profound purpose. For all his brilliance, however, he was still a boy who loved to run and jump and tumble. Who swung from the backyard oak tree in a rope-and-tire swing. Who was thrilled when given a tricycle. Who giggled in delight while watching his uncle Jacob roll a shiny quarter end over-end across his knuckles and perform other simple coin tricks. Blind he remained until an afternoon in May 1993, when at last the miracle occurred, and the meaning that Tom Vanadium had foreseen so long ago began to manifest. As if a door had briefly opened between this windless day and another world, a single gust rattled rain against the windows. They agreed that to the outside world, Barty must continue to appear to be a sightless man or otherwise either be treated like a freak or be subjected, perhaps unwillingly, to experimentation. In the modern world, there was no tolerance for miracles. Only family could be told of this development. Even without the dangling cigarette and without the cynical sneer, Nolly had an air of toughness worthy of Sam Spade, largely because the face that nature had given him was a splendid disguise for the sentimental sweetie who lived behind it. With his bull neck, with his strong hands, with his shirt-sleeves rolled up to expose his lovely hairy forearms, he made a properly intimidating impression: as if Humphrey Bogart, Sydney Greenstreet, and Peter Lorre had been put in a blender and then poured into one suit. "The girl's baby," said Nolly, "was placed with Catholic Family Services for adoption." She was so hot that the ice melted quickly. A thin trickle slid down her throat, but not enough to take the Sahara out of her voice when she said, "More." 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. THE GENEROUS EXPENSE allowance provided by Simon Magusson paid for a three-room suite at a comfortable hotel. One bedroom for Tom Vanadium, one for Celestina and Angel. The boy-wonder physician turned to Junior again and assumed an expression of compassion so inauthentic that if he'd been playing a doctor on even the cheesiest daytime soap opera, he'd have been stripped of his actor's-union card, fired, and possibly horsewhipped on a live television special. "We'll be doing the procedure this afternoon, so I wouldn't want to give you anything much for the pain just prior to anesthesia and sedation. But don't you worry, Mr. Pinchbeck. Once we've lanced these boils, when you wake up, ninety percent of the pain will be gone." Barty followed the movement of her hand, raised his gaze to her eyes, hesitated, and then said questioningly, "No pie?" If he had cut himself intentionally for the express purpose of writing the name in blood, then the reservoir of anger was deeper still and pent up behind a formidable dam of obsession. "Now you don't have to worry," Angel said, "about what happens to him if ever you're gone, Aunt Aggie. If he can do this, he can do anything, and you can rest easy." She bent down and kissed his cheek, his right eye, his left,

his brow, his dry cracked lips. "I love you so much. I wanted to die when I thought you weren't with me anymore..Knickknacks and mementos were not to be found anywhere in the house. And until now Junior had seen nothing hanging on the barren walls except a calendar in the kitchen..Now, trouble. Different from what he'd experienced before but just as powerful and terrifying. He didn't need to regurgitate, but he desperately needed to evacuate..A residual tension drained out of Junior. He was somewhat surprised that he had still been concerned about the song..Bartholomew had been able to focus his eyes much sooner than the average baby was supposed to be able to focus. To a surprising extent, he was already engaged in the world around him..THE SUN ROSE above clouds, above fog, and with the gray day came a silver drizzle. The city was lanced by needles of rain, and filth drained from it, swelling the gutters with a poisonous flood..A s?ance was what it appeared to be at first. Eight people were gathered around the dining-room table, which stood utterly bare. No food, no drinks, no centerpiece. They all exhibited that shiny-faced look of people nervously awaiting the revelations of a spirit medium: part trepidation, part soaring hope..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..Perhaps she was afflicted with only expressive aphasia, but she must be confused to some degree. The baby, which would be placed for adoption, was not hers to name..Now, however, he was thinking not about what Agnes's story might mean to Reverend White, but about what the minister might be able to do to provide at least a small degree of comfort to Agnes, who spent her life comforting others..As though frightened of the gentle certainty in Celestina's eyes, the doctor turned away from he, and toward the window once more..This night in Weott, with the high solemn silence of the redwood forests out there now and waiting to embrace him in the morning, he slept without dreams..In adversity lies great opportunity, as Caesar Zedd teaches, and always, of course, there is a bright side even when you aren't able immediately to see it..Undiminished antiperistaltic waves coursed through his duodenum, stomach, and esophagus, and now he gasped desperately for air between each expulsion, without much success..Glorying 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..One apartment to the right, one to the left. Junior went to the right, to Apartment 1, where he'd seen the lights come on behind the curtained windows..Shortly after nine-thirty in the morning, they landed in Eugene, and the cab driver who conveyed Junior to the town's largest shopping center spent more time staring at his afflicted passenger in the rearview mirror than he did watching the road. Junior got out of the taxi and paid through the driver's open window. The cabbie didn't even wait for his fiery-faced fare to turn completely away before he crossed himself..For a while, Junior half convinced himself that the quarter in his cheeseburger, in December '65, was a meaningless coincidence, unrelated to Vanadium. His short tour of the kitchen, in search of the perpetrator, had given him reason to believe the diner's sanitary standards were inadequate. Recalling the greasy men on that culinary death squad, he knew that he'd been fortunate not to discover a dead rodent spread-eagle on the melted cheese, or an old sock..Glaring and red-faced, lowering his voice almost to a whisper, Neddy said, "I'm sorry, but you've got me all wrong. I'm not like Renee and you."

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