

LARGE PRINT DOT TO DOT THERAPY

In the face of his kindness, however, she couldn't refuse his request. She nodded..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." Piano music drifted into the restaurant from the adjacent bar, so soft and yet sprightly that it made the clink of silverware seem like music, too..If he killed Bartholomew and got away clean, as he expected that he would, then he could subsequently return everything in the van to the apartment. He was just being prudent by planning for his future, because the future was, after all, the only place he lived..Previously, Miss Pixie Lee had been from Texas, but Angel had recently heard that Georgia was famous for its peaches, which at once captured her imagination. Now Pixie Lee had a new life in a Georgia mansion carved out of a giant peach..A few attractive women were here alone, proof that social mores had changed dramatically in three years. Junior was aware of their hot gazes, their need, and he knew that he could have any of them..Spinning off the stool, the bun cap in one hand and the mustard dispenser clutched in the other, Junior surveyed the long narrow diner. Looking for the maniac cop. The dead maniac cop. He half expected to see Thomas Vanadium: head crusted in blood, face bashed to pulp, caked in quarry silt, and dripping water as though he'd climbed out of his Studebaker coffin just minutes ago..Tom didn't understand Edom's comment or the smiles that it drew, but otherwise, he was impressed by the ease with which these people absorbed what he had said and by the imagination with which they began to expand upon his speculation. It was almost as though they had long known the shape of what he'd told them and that he was only filling in a few confirming details.. "My dad's already armored me," Celestina assured her. "He says art lasts, but critics are the buzzing insects of a single summer day."..nonetheless. The rapist's curse. Healthy, but healthy at the expense of Phimie.. "Yours is a harder job than mine," Lipscomb told Grace, dandling Angel as he spoke. "I have no doubt of that."..Clutching the red rose in his left hand, the brightly wrapped gift box half crushed in his right, Thomas Vanadium lay at Junior's mercy, with no tricks to perform, no quarter to set dancing across his knuckles..If the policeman's gray eyes had earlier been as hard as nailheads, they were now points, and behind them was willpower strong enough to drive spikes through stone..She leaned forward in her seat, and toward him, so he could see her more directly, and when she put one trembling hand against his cheek, his head dropped forward on neck muscles as limp as rags, his chin..He heard her explain that the title of the exhibition had been inspired by one of her father's sermons, which aired on a nationally syndicated weekly radio program more than three years ago. This wasn't a religious program, per se, but rather one concerned with a search for meaning in life; it usually broadcast interviews with contemporary philosophers as well as speeches by them, but from time to time featured a clergyman. Her father's sermon received the greatest response from listeners of anything aired on the program in twenty years, and three weeks later, it was rerun by popular demand..His musical abilities were most likely an offshoot of his more extraordinary talent for math. He said that music was numbers, and what he seemed to mean was that he could all but instantly translate the notes of any song into a personal numerical code, retain it, and repeat the song by repeating the memorized sequence of code. When he read sheet music, he saw arrangements of numbers..Soon he realized this was a mistaken assumption, because when the instructor began trying to unknot him from his lotus position, a defensive numbness deserted Junior, and he became aware of pain. Excruciating.. "You must've slipped this one in my pocket when you first came in here," Nolly deduced..Concerned that Junior's crying jag would trigger spasms of the abdominal muscles and ultimately another attack of hemorrhagic vomiting, the nurse had with her a tranquilizer. She wanted him to use the apple juice to wash down the pill..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..Action. just concentrate on action and ignore the disgusting aftermath. Remember the runaway train and the bus full of nuns stuck on the tracks. Stay with the train, don't go back to look at the smashed nuns, just keep moving forward, and everything will be all right..Glancing at her in the rearview mirror, the driver said, "Pretty exhilarating, huh? Your first big show?".. "He's crafty, you say. Can you use him?"..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..During this same period, having subscribed to the opera, Junior attended a performance of Wagner's The Ring of the Nibelung..that he could not entirely analyze. Any amateur magician-indeed, anyone willing to practice enough hours, magician or not-could master this trick. It was mere skill, not sorcery. "What was your motive, Enoch?"..Sweaty, chilled, trembling, weak-kneed, watery-eyed with self-pity, Junior spread a plastic garbage bag on the driver's seat. He got in the Suburban, twisted the key in the ignition, and groaned as the engine vibrations threatened to undo him..Turning his patched eyes in the general direction of his mother, Barty said, "Oops.".. "It's all the same. Cars, trains, ships, all the same," Jacob insisted. "You remember the Toya Maru? Japanese ferry capsized back in September '54. Eleven hundred sixty-eight people dead. Or worse, in '48, off Manchuria, God almighty, the boiler exploded on a Chinese merchant ship, six thousand died. Six thousand on a single ship!".. "Blood tests should reveal whether the child's yours or not. That also might explain all this."..Although Junior had not answered, Vanadium said, "Yes, I thought you heard it."..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..Considering Junior's actions on his last night in Spruce Hills, eleven months ago, he must be cautious now. Without incriminating himself, pretending ignorance, he hoped to learn if his carefully planned scenario, regarding Victoria's death and Vanadium's sudden disappearance, had

convinced the authorities-or whether something had gone wrong that might explain the quarter at the diner..Frequently, these days, she found herself explaining aspects of life to Barty that she hadn't expected to discuss for years to come. She wondered how she could make him understand this: Life can be so sweet, so full, that sometimes happiness is nearly as intense as anguish, and the pressure of it in the heart swells close to pain..Following little Bartholomew's murder, however, people might remember the man who had been asking after the mother, Celestina. Junior wasn't just any man, either; irresistibly handsome, he left an indelible impression on people, especially on women. Inevitably, the cops would be knocking on his door, sooner or later..Angel, however, focused on a point in the air above the table. Faint furrows marked her brow for a moment, but then the frown gave way to a smile..Thanks to his intelligence and his personality, Barty's presence was so great for his age that Agnes tended to think of him as being physically larger and stronger than he actually was. As the scent of grass grew more complex and even more appealing, she saw her son more clearly than she'd seen him in a while: quite small, fatherless yet brave, burdened with a gift that was a blessing but that also made a normal boyhood impossible, forced to grow up at a up faster pace than any child should be required to endure. Barty was achingly delicate, so vulnerable that when Agnes looked at him, she felt a little of the awful sense of helplessness that burdened Edom and Jacob..AFTER SPENDING Wednesday as a tourist, Junior began to look for a suitable apartment on Thursday. In spite of his new wealth, he did not intend to pay hotel-room rates for an extended period..Never would he pause to reload at this desperate penultimate moment, when success or failure might be decided in mere seconds. That would be the choice of a man who thought first and acted later, the behavior of a born loser..Her brothers' solemnity irritated Agnes. They appeared to be taking this reading seriously, as though it were far more than just a little after-dinner entertainment.. "From time to time now, you're going to be written about," Helen warned. "Be prepared for a peevish critic or two, furious about your optimism..".Reading about child prodigies, Agnes learned that most if not all math whizzes also possessed musical talent. To a lesser but still impressive extent, many young geniuses in the music world were also proficient at math..At home again, in the safety of the family, Barty collapsed in exhaustion from the sustained effort to see with eyes that he didn't possess. Abed for ten days, feverish, afflicted with vertigo and migraine headaches, nauseated, he lost eight pounds before his recovery was complete..He had been surprised to learn her age. She didn't appear to be that old. Thirty or not, Victoria was unusually attractive..The previous day, Jacob and Edom had driven back to Bright Beach, to prepare for Barty's arrival. Now they hurried down the back porch steps and across the lawn, as Maria followed the driveway past the house and parked near the detached garage at the rear of the deep property..Junior knew that he looked as guilty as any man had ever looked this side of the first apple and the perfect garden. The sweating, the spasms of violent tremors, the defensive note that he could not keep out of his voice, the inability to look anyone directly in the eyes for more than a few seconds-all were telltales that none of these professionals would overlook. He desperately needed to get a grip on himself, but he couldn't find a handle..Switching on the windshield wipers, Joey said, "That's the first time I've ever heard you admit that either of your brothers is odd..".Since her conversation with Joshua Nunn the previous Thursday, she'd had more than four days to armor herself for the worst. She prepared for it as well as any mother could while still holding on to her sanity..Most likely, Reverend White's ramblings were as greasy with sentiment and oily with irrational optimism as were his daughter's paintings, so Junior was in no hurry to learn the name of the radio program or to write for a transcript of the sermon..Junior tossed garments on the floor and across the bed to create the impression that the detective had packed with haste. After being imprudent enough to blast Victoria Bressler five times with his service revolver-perhaps in a jealous rage, or perhaps because he had gone nuts-Vanadium would have been frantic to flee justice..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..And when she finally looked directly at him, blinked at him, her lashes flicking off a spray of fine droplets, Agnes saw that Barty was dry. Not a single jewel of rain glimmered in his thick dark hair or on the baby-smooth planes of his face. His shirt and sweater were as dry as if they had just been taken off a hanger and from a dresser drawer. A few drops darkened the legs of the boy's khaki pants--but Agnes realized this was water that had dripped from her arm as she'd reached across him to adjust the vent..Bartholomew's genius might have been intimidating, even off-putting, if he'd not been as much child as child genius. Likewise, he would have been wearisome if impressed by his own gifts..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.. "Your mother's wise," Paul said. "More than all the owls in the world," the boy agreed..Eventually Agnes came to suspect that for all the pleasure the boy took in math and for all his aptitude with numbers, his greatest gift and his deepest passion lay elsewhere. He was finding his way toward a destiny both more astonishing and stranger than the lives of any of the many prodigies about whom she'd read..He bought knives. And then sheaths for the knives. He acquired a knife-sharpening kit and spent the evening grinding blades..Drawn by voices on the second floor, Tom took the stairs two at a time. A man and a boy. Barty and Cain. To the left in the hallway, and then to a room on the right..Vanadium couldn't know the whereabouts of the quarter. Besides, even when he'd swung the lunch tray over Junior's lap, the detective hadn't been close enough to pick the pocket of the robe..the beast would find them one day, but she hadn't spoken of that possibility in perhaps two and a half years..In spite of the urgency of his desire, he followed a circuitous route to Victorial's, doubling back on himself twice, watching for surveillance as he drove. If he were being followed, his tail was an invisible man in a ghost car..When Renee realized that this rejection was complete and final, she-he, whatever-was transformed from well-sugared southern lady to bitter, venomous reptile. Eyes glittering with fury, lips

twisted and skinned back from her teeth, she called him all kinds of bastard, stringing epithets together so effortlessly and colorfully that she enhanced his vocabulary more than had all the home-study courses that he'd ever taken, combined. "And face it, pretty-boy, you knew what I was from the moment you offered to buy me a drink. You knew, and you wanted it, wanted me, and then when we got right down to the nasty, you lost your nerve. Lost your nerve, pretty-boy, but not your need." On this January twilight, as Maria Elena Gonzalez drove south along the coast from Newport Beach, all men of the sea must have been reaching for bottles of rum to celebrate the fruit-punch sky: ripe cherries in the west, blood oranges overhead, clustered grapes dark purple in the east. Besides, even before he had fully turned on his charm, before he had shown her that a ride on the Junior Cain love machine would make other men seem forever inadequate, Renee was so hot for him that it might have been wise to open a bottle of champagne to douse her when spontaneous combustion destroyed her Chanel suit. "Would you pretend to wake up if I tried to smother you?" asked Detective Vanadium. The aging, fugitive Nazi had been replaced at the front desk by a woman with messily chopped blond hair, a brutish face, and arms that would dissuade Charles Atlas from challenging her. She changed a five-dollar bill into coins for the vending machines and snarled at him only once in strangely accented English. Paul set the nightstand down but waited, ready to shove the furniture into the stairwell if the swaddled gunman dared return. He'd been invited to a Christmas Eve celebration with a satanic theme, but he hadn't intended to go. The party was not being thrown by real Satanists, which might have been interesting, but by a group of young artists, all nonbelievers, who shared a wry sense of humor. A sudden strange weakness, a formless dread, dropped Agnes out of her crouch and onto her knees beside the boy. Two things about him were remarkable, beginning with his face. His head was wrapped with white gauze bandages, so he looked like Claude Rains in *The Invisible Man* or like Humphrey Bogart in that movie about the escaped convict who has plastic surgery to foil the police and to start a new life with Lauren Bacall. Blond hair sprouted from the top of the elaborate wrappings. Otherwise, only his eyes, his nostrils, and his lips were uncovered. "No," Otter said, and hesitated. He felt he owed this man an explanation. "See, it's not so much won't as can't. I thought of making plugs in the planking of that galley, near the keel—you know what I mean by plugs? They'd work out as the timbers work when she gets in a heavy sea." Hound nodded. "But I couldn't do it. I'm a shipbuilder. I can't build a ship to sink. With the men aboard her. My hands wouldn't do it. So I did what I could. I made her go her own way. Not his way." Celestina's question had been about Phimie, but they had told her about the baby, and she was alarmed by their evasion. From the phone, Barty proceeded directly to the refrigerator. He opened the door, got a can of orange soda, and returned without hesitation to his chair at the table. On one particular street in Bright Beach, however, the most significant event of the year occurred on a pleasant afternoon in early April, when Barty, now nine years old, climbed to the top of the great oak and perched there in triumph, king of the tree and master of his blindness. "Wally," Celestina said, without hesitation, because suddenly she saw something of a Wally in his green eyes, which were livelier than they had been before. Footsteps in the hall drew their attention to the open door, where the surgeon appeared in his loose cotton greens. If he didn't find the Rolex and get back to his car before the reception ended, he'd forfeit his best chance of following Celestina to Bartholomew. The kiss was lovely, long and easy, full of restrained passion that boded well for nights to come in the marriage bed. Granted that he was only three going on four, nevertheless Barty had never met anyone with as much cheerful imagination as Angel. He intended to marry her in, oh, maybe twenty years. But he was more than she had ever imagined her boy to be, more than merely a prodigy. 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. 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. Supposing that this new enthusiasm was an attempt to uncover skullduggery in Seraphim's accident, then the girl would be doing Junior a service even after her demise. Whether or not the traffic accident was an accident, Junior hadn't had anything to do with it. Angel followed him at two steps, and when she stood beside his chair, watching him open the soft drink, Barty said, "Why were you following me?" "Oh, that's me, all right. I'm on the FBI's most-wanted list for criminal pie jostling." 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. As instructed earlier by phone, Junior purchased a large box of Raisinettes and a box of Milk Duds at the refreshment stand, and then he sat in one of the last three rows in the center section, eating the Milk Duds, grimacing at the sticky noises his shoes made when he moved them on the tacky floor, and waiting for Google to find him. Angel moved her hand to Barty's right eye, and again he didn't twitch with surprise when her fingers lightly touched his closed and sagging lid. "I won't let you forget." 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. The right side of the girl's face appeared to be more strongly affected by gravity. "Six hundred ninety-five people were killed in three states. Winds so powerful that some of the bodies were thrown a mile and a half from where they were snatched off the ground." Agnes rubbed noses with him again, kissed him, and rose from the edge of the bed. Sitting in Simon Magusson's mahogany-paneled office, reading the contents of this file, Junior was aghast. "I could have been killed." Commodified fantasy takes no risks: it invents nothing, but imitates and trivializes. It proceeds by depriving the old stories of their intellectual and ethical complexity, turning their action to violence, their

actors to dolls, and their truth-telling to sentimental platitude. Heroes brandish their swords, lasers, wands, as mechanically as combine harvesters, reaping profits. Profoundly disturbing moral choices are sanitized, made cute, made safe. The passionately conceived ideas of the great story-tellers are copied, stereotyped, reduced to toys, molded in bright-colored plastic, advertised, sold, broken, junked, replaceable, interchangeable. But the boy played no tricks against his father. He took his beatings in silence and learned to hide his gift. All day, for reasons he couldn't quite put into words, Junior had carried that quarter in a pocket of his bathrobe. From time to time, he had taken it out to examine it. "I already told you—anything in your heart is as easy to read as the open page of a book." In his mind's eye, he saw the answering machine with uncanny clarity. That curious gadget. Sitting atop the scarred pine desk. He had nothing against Negroes. He didn't wish them ill. He wasn't prejudiced. Live and let live. He believed that as long as they stayed with their own kind and abided by the rules of a polite society, like everyone else, they had a right to live in peace. To Perri's bed, a journey of only a few steps, but farther than unwanted Rome. The carpet seeming to pull at his feet, to suck like mud under his shoes. The air as thick as liquid in his resistant to his progress. Elsewhere in the cemetery, about 150 yards away, another interment service—with a much larger group of mourners—had begun prior to this one for Naomi. Now it was over, and the people were dispersing to their cars. She wanted to tell him not to say these queer things, not to talk this way, yet she couldn't speak those words. When Barty asked her why, as inevitably he would, she'd have to say she was worried that something might be terribly wrong with him, but she couldn't express this fear to her boy, not ever. He was the lintel of her heart, the keystone of her soul, and if he failed because of her lack of confidence in him, she herself would collapse into ruin. "This was back on January 24, 1556," said Edom with unhesitating authority, for he had memorized tens of thousands of facts about the worst natural disasters in history. He couldn't work up sufficient saliva to get the rasp out of his voice: "Then you could learn to do it." Leaning across the front seat, he lowered the passenger's window six inches. Then he lowered the driver's-side window an equal distance. Jacob trusted no one but Agnes and Edom. He'd trusted Joey Lampion, too, after years of wary observance. Now Joey was dead, and his corpse was in the embalming chamber of the Panglo Funeral Home. For the first time in many months, Barty didn't want to sleep in the dark. They left the door of the room open, admitting some of the fluorescent glow from the hallway. Less cautious than the typical accountant, perhaps mellow in this season of peace, Prosser opened the door without hesitation. Over potato soup and an asparagus salad, the dinner conversation got off to a promising start: a discussion of favorite potato dishes, observations on the weather, talk of Mexico at Christmas. Maria Elena Gonzalez, where no one lived with fear like her brothers Edom and Jacob. "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." Stepping forward, Agnes said, "When Barty holds my hand and walks me through the rain, I get wet even while he stays dry. The same for all the rest of us here ... except Angel." Behind her, he said, "And is that my gray cardigan? What did you do to my cardigan?" "She reads too much hard-boiled detective fiction," Nolly said. "And lately, she's talking about writing it." The floor of the spacious bathroom featured beige marble tiles with diamond-shaped inlays of black granite. The countertop and the shower stall were fabricated from matching marble, and the same marble was employed in the wainscoting. "If you don't, your feeling gland isn't working. Want me to read you to sleep?" As he turned the corner onto Jasmine Way, he felt his heart lift in expectation of the sight of his home. It wasn't a grand residence—a typical Main Street, USA, house—but it was more splendid to Paul than Paris, London, and Rome combined, cities that he would never see and would never regret failing to see. "Come with me," Paul Damascus said at once. "To Bright Beach. It is far away from San Francisco, and he'd never think of looking for you there. Why would he? You've no connection to the place. I've got a house with enough room. You're welcome. And you wouldn't be among strangers." cocktail lounge to be her personal pickup spot. Naturally, people who worked the lounge knew her, were friendly with her. They would remember any man who accompanied the heiress to her penthouse. She thought all that, but she closed her eyes and said: "I'll be okay. Give me a second here, all right?" She snatched the handset away from Angel, told Bellini, "He's here," threw the phone on the bed, told Angel, "Stay close to me," ran to the windows, and jerked the drapes out of the way. "You know Mommy," Barty said, almost desperately sponging up the sight of his little girl's face and wringing the images into his memory to sustain him in the next long darkness. At the end, with the salt Tom and the pepper Tom standing side by side in their different but parallel worlds, Maria said, "Seems like science fiction." More often than not, in a social situation, regardless of its nature, there came a time when Edom had to bolt, and here now was the time, not because he floundered at a loss for words, not because he became panicked that he would say the wrong thing or would knock over his coffee cup, or would in some way prove himself foolish or as clumsy as a clown in full pratfall, but in this instance because he didn't want to bring his tears into Agnes's day. Recently she'd had too many tears in her life, and though these were not tears of anguish, though they were tears of love, he didn't want to burden her with them. In regard for Barty's tender age, Dr. Franklin Chan had arranged for Agnes to spend the night in her son's room, in the second bed, which currently wasn't needed for a patient. Cypresses lined the entry drive to the cemetery. Tall and solemn, the trees kept guard, as though posted to prevent restless spirits from roaming out into the land of the living. Abruptly, without a cannonade of thunder, without artillery strikes of lightning, the storm broke. As loud as marching armies, rain tramped across the roof. They were in the rain, the solid-glassy-pounding-roaring rain, every bit as much as Gene Kelly had been when he danced and sang and capered along a storm-soaked city street in that movie, but whereas the actor had been saturated by the end of the number, these two children remained dry. Tom's eyes strained to resolve this paradox, even though he knew that all miracles defied resolution. He was Father Tom again, having recommitted to his vows three years previous. At his request, the Church had assigned him as the chaplain of Pie Lady Services. Vanadium was no ordinary cop, as he himself

had said. In his obsession, convinced that Junior had murdered Naomi and impatient with the need to find evidence to prove it, what was to stop the detective if he decided to deal out justice himself? What was to prevent him from walking up to the Suburban right now and shooting his suspect pointblank?.When Agnes crunched the ice, the nurse said, "No, no. Don't swallow it all at once. Let it melt."Earlier, he had placed an open fifth of vodka on the table, in front of Victoria. The nurse, no longer in the chair, sprawled on the floor as if she had emptied another bottle before this one..An exceptionally attractive woman, alone at the bar, stirred his desire. Glossy black hair: the tresses of night itself, shorn from the sky.Only a few theater goers attended the matinee. No one sat near, so Google and Junior openly swapped packages: a five-by-six manila envelope to Google, a nine-by-twelve to Junior..Some acts were distasteful, too, such as searching the lunatic lawman for his car keys and his badge..Caught unaware by the joke, she laughed. "Well, I'm glad to know I'm good for something. Is there maybe a special pie you'd like me to make today?".The stress that he currently felt wasn't the same that he so often relieved with women. This was an energizing tension, a not-unpleasant tightening of the nerves, a delicious anticipation that he wanted to experience to its fullest-until the gallery reception for Celestina, on the evening that her show opened, January 12. This tension could not be released by intercourse, but only by the killing of Bartholomew, and when that long-sought moment arrived, Junior expected the relief he experienced would far exceed mere orgasm.

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