

## **HOLIDAYS AND OTHER FESTIVALS FROM LOW SUNDAY TO THE TWENTY FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

He turned from the cowering girl and studied the boy, who stood a few steps inside the room, holding a can of soda in each hand. The artificial eyes were convincing, but they didn't possess the knowing look that so troubled him in the strange girl. Later, when the seven of them were gathered at the dinner table, the adults raised glasses of Chardonnay, the children raised tumblers of Pepsi, and Maria gave the toast. "To Bartholomew, the image of his father, who was the kindest man I've ever known. To my Bonita and my Francesca, who brighten every day. To Edom and Jacob, from whom ... from whom I've learned so much that has made me think about the fragility of life and made me realize how precious is every day. And to Agnes, my dearest friend, who has given me, oh, so much, including all these words. God bless us, every one." "The girl's baby," said Nolly, "was placed with Catholic Family Services for adoption." Perhaps these two months of frustration had brought him to this: hair-trigger nerves, fevered imagination, and anticipation distilled into dread. In a minute or two, one of the cops returned, crouching close as the medics worked. "There's no intruder." "You'll do better away from the ships, all the fighting and raiding. The King's working the old mines at Samory, round the mountain. There you'd be out of his way. Work for him you must, if you want to stay alive. I'll see that you're sent there. If you'll go." With a tenderness that surprises and moves Celestina, the tall nurse closes the dead girl's eyes. She opens a fresh, clean sheet and places it over the body, from the feet up, covering the precious face last of all. As Tom reached Celestina, she said, "Shots." She said, "Gunshots." She held the receiver in one hand and pulled at her hair with the other, as if with the administration of a little pain, she might wake up from this nightmare. She said, "He's in Oregon." "I don't like the old crazy doctor," she said, still drawing. "I wish it was about bunnies on vacation-or maybe a toad learns to drive a car and has adventures." evening. She brought her daughters, seven-year-old Bonita and six year-old Francesca, who came with their newest Barbie dolls-Color Magic Barbie, the Barbie Beautiful Blues Gift Set, Barbie's friends. 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. As a matter of principle, Junior considered firing the slit-mouthed troll on the spot, but then Magusson said, "You shouldn't be bothered any further by Detective Vanadium." In November, Edom asked Maria Gonzalez to dinner and a movie. Although he was only six years older than Maria, both agreed that this was a date between friends, not really a boy-girl thing. "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. Perplexed by their peculiar behavior, even slightly unnerved, Tom answered Maria's question. "I'm afraid there's nothing else I can do, nothing more of a fantastic nature." "Salt water would be too cumbersome anyway. He'd have to drink a lot of it shortly before he heaved, but he was surrounded by cops with good reason to keep an eye on him. Does ipecac come in capsule form?" because even to cry in pain will invite more vicious discipline than the pummeling he's already endured. His father. He found the strength to squeeze her hand tighter than before. "Be safe. Keep Angel safe." "Making too many wrong choices," Grace White said, "produces too many branches-a gnarled, twisted, ugly growth." At eleven o'clock Saturday morning, having just settled in the hotel after arriving from St. Mary's, they were waiting for the SFPD to deliver suitcases of clothes and toiletries that Rena Moller, Celestina's neighbor, had packed according to her instructions. While waiting, the three of them took an early lunch-or a late breakfast-at a room service table in the living room. The moment that the roof of the car vanished beneath the water, Junior hurried away, retracing on foot the route he had driven. He didn't have to go all the way back to Vanadium's place, only to the dark house where he'd left Victoria Bressler. He had a date with a dead woman. If he hadn't been such a rational, stable, no-nonsense person all of his life, Junior might have thought he was losing his mind. For forty-eight hours, he pumped himself full of prescription antihistamines, immersed himself in bathtubs brimming with numbingly cold water, and lathered himself with soothing lotions. In misery, gripped by self-pity, he dared not think about the 9-mm pistol that he had stolen from Frieda Bliss. When she complimented him on being such a good little soldier, abiding his cold with no complaint, he shrugged. Without looking up from the coloring book, he said, "It's just here." The custom-fitted gold-link band of the wristwatch closed with a clasp that, when released, allowed the watch to slip over the hand with ease. Junior knew at once that the clasp had come undone when his arm tangled in the belt of Neddy's raincoat. The corpse had torn loose and tumbled into the Dumpster, taking Junior's watch with it. He slipped behind the door and raised the pewter candlestick over his head. Weighing perhaps five pounds, the object made a formidable bludgeon, almost as good as a hammer. the sentences. The substance of what she said and the tone in which she said it were so perfect that it almost seemed as though an angel had relieved her of this burden by possessing her long enough to help her son understand what must happen and why. 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. When Victoria failed to answer the door, this man would not simply go away. He had been invited. He was expected. Lights were on in the house. The lack of a response to his knock would be taken as a sign that something was amiss. The traffic light turned green. Now onward home. Rolex recovered and bright upon his wrist, Junior Cain drove his Mercedes with a restraint that required more self-control than he had realized he could tap, even with the guidance of Zedd. The ninth card was a jack of spades. Maria called it a knave of and at the sight of it, her bright smile dimmed. Beyond the windows, the winter night sifted sootily down through the twinkling city, as he sat in his living room with a glass of Dry Sack in one hand and the picture of Celestina White in the other. Kathleen savored her martini. "Mmmm ... as cold as a hit man's heart and as crisp as a hundred-dollar bill from the devil's wallet." Five days later, on Barty's birthday morning, when Agnes and Edom were in the kitchen,

making preparations for the visits that had earned her the affectionate title of Pie Lady, Barty was in his highchair, eating a vanilla wafer lightly dampened with milk. Each time a crumb fell from the cookie, the boy plucked it off the tray and neatly conveyed it to his tongue.. "Oh, my Lord," Chicane groaned as he and Sparky half carried Junior into the bathroom.. Shaking off this peculiar case of the spooks, Barty proceeded toward the stairs. Just when he reached the newel post, he heard the faint creak of the marker floorboard behind him.. The fact that Barty saw twisty spots with either eye closed had prepared Agnes for this bleak news. Yet in spite of the defense that foreknowledge provided her, the teeth of sorrow bit deep.. If the angular mass was Neddy, the vaguely warm, damp something must be the strangled man's protruding tongue.. If they were suspicious of him, they showed no obvious alarm. The three went inside in no particular rush, and judging by their demeanor, Junior decided that they hadn't spotted him, after all.. "No member of the society ever violates a secret confidence," Agnes assured him.. She switched off the hall light and stood at the half-open door, listening, waiting.. 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.. An overflow crowd of mourners had attended the services at St. Thomas's Church, standing shoulder to shoulder at the back of the nave, through the narthex, and across the sidewalk outside, and now everyone appeared to have come to the cemetery, as well.. One of the gifts of power is to know power. Wizard knows wizard, unless the concealment is very skillful. And the boy had no skills at all except in boat-building, of which he was a promising scholar by the age of twelve. About that time the midwife who had helped his mother at his birth came by and said to his parents, "Let Otter come to me in the evenings after work. He should learn the songs and be prepared for his naming day." In his apartment once more, enjoying a cognac and a handful of pistachios as Monday changed to Tuesday, he decided that he should make 'preparations for the possibility that he might one day leave incriminating evidence in spite of his precautions. He ought to convert a portion of his assets into easily portable and anonymous wealth, like gold coins and diamonds. Establishing two or three alternate identities, with documentation, also would be wise.. She kissed his cheek, and he pulled his arms out from under the covers to hug her. Such small arms, but such a fierce hug.. The busboy swept the empty appetizer plates away as the waiter arrived simultaneously with small salads. Fresh martinis followed.. "And you give yourself far too little credit," Salk continued gently. "There's no doubt in my mind that Perri was a hero. But she was married to a hero, as well." When Bartholomew first said "Kay-jub," and held out one hand toward his uncle, Jacob surprised Agnes by crying with happiness.. As Sklent so insightfully put it: Some of us live on after death, survive in spirit, because we are just too stubborn, selfish, greedy, grubbing, vicious, psychotic, and evil to accept our demise. None of those qualities described sweet Naomi, who had been far too kind and loving and meek to live on in spirit, after her lovely flesh failed. Now at one with the earth, Naomi was no threat to Junior, and the state had paid for its negligence in her death, and the whole matter should have been brought to closure. There were only two barriers to full and final resolution: first, the stubborn, selfish, greedy, grubbing, vicious, psychotic, evil spirit of Thomas Vanadium; and second, Seraphim's bastard baby--little Bartholomew.. Junior said nothing. He was still upset with Naomi for hiding the pregnancy from him, but he was delighted that the baby would have been his. Now Vanadium couldn't claim that Naomi's infidelity and the resultant bastard had been the motive for murder.. Mocked by the silvery ping-ting-jingle of the maniac detective emptying his ghostly pockets, Junior ran.. "Where did it go?" Grace asked her granddaughter, making as much effort as she could to lighten the mood for the girl's sake.. Matching his mother's whisper, taking obvious delight in their conspiracy, he said, "Our own secret society." Like autumn-red ivy, lushly leafed vines of flame crawled up the house. The porch under them was ablaze, as well. Shingles smoldered beneath their feet, and flames ringed the roof on which they stood.. Still seeking some missing fact, some insight that would help him understand the maniac's Bartholomew obsession, Tom asked more questions until Celestina suddenly realized and revealed what might be the information that he sought: Cain's perverse insistence on playing the reverend's taped rough draft of "This Momentous Day" throughout his long assault on her sister.. When she closed the front door and turned away from it, Agnes bumped her swollen belly into Joey. His eyebrows shot up, and he put his hands on her distended abdomen, as if she were more fragile than a robin's egg and more valuable than one by Faberge.. "I never saw a Moor--never saw the Sea--Yet know I how the Heather looks--And what a Billow be."" On Joey's side, there was no family to provide help. His mother had died of leukemia when he was four. His dad, fond of beer and brawling--like father not like son--was killed in a bar fight five years later. Without close relatives willing to take him in, Joey went to an orphanage. At nine he wasn't prime adoption material--babies were what was wanted--and he'd been raised in the institution.. "Not that trains are any better. Look at the Bakersfield crash back in '60. Santa Fe Chief, out of San Francisco, smashed into an oil-tank truck. Seventeen people crushed, burned in a river of fire." "Yes, but it's a Catholic hospital, and they offer this option to all unwed mothers--doesn't matter what their religion." Her name was Victoria Bressler, and she was an attractive blonde. She would never have been serious competition for Naomi, because Naomi had been singularly stunning, but Naomi, after all, was gone.. "Wish I could describe his face. Frosty the Snowman was never that white. The surveillance van is parked right there, two spaces south of the vending machines--". His in-laws' chances of receiving compensation for their pain and suffering over Naomi's death were seriously compromised if her husband did not hold the state or county responsible. In this, as in nothing previously, they felt the need to stand united as a family.. No one in Junior's circles seemed to care about the crisis in American music. He supposed he had a greater awareness of injustice than did most people.. MONEY FOR THE DEAD. The decomposing flesh of a beloved wife and an unborn baby transmuted into a fortune was an achievement that put to shame the alchemists' dreams of turning lead to gold.. Always, he was good with Barty, and on this occasion, he teased more than the usual number of smiles and giggles from the boy as he tried to

get him to read the Snellen chart on the wall. Then he lowered the lights in the examination room to study his eyes with an ophthalmometer and an ophthalmoscope..If Junior had not been such a rational man, schooled in logic and reason by the books of Caesar Zedd, he might have snapped there in the street, before the photograph of Seraphim, might have begun to shake and sob and babble until he wound up in a psychiatric ward. But although his trembling knees felt no more supportive than aspic, they didn't dissolve under him. He couldn't breathe for a minute, and his vision darkened at the periphery, and the noise of passing traffic suddenly sounded like the agonized shrieks of people tortured beyond endurance, but he held fast to his wits long enough to realize that the name under the photo, which served as the centerpiece of a poster, read Celestina White in four-inch letters, not Seraphim..Considering his battered and stitched face, considering also his tragic and colorful history, Vanadium spoke with remarkably little drama. His voice was calm, nearly flat, rising and falling so little that he almost talked in a monotone..Dragonfly.Since discovering the quarter in his cheeseburger, Junior had been half convinced that the maniac cop survived the bludgeoning. In spite of his grievous wounds, perhaps Vanadium had swum up through a hundred feet of murky water, barely avoiding being drowned..Junior assumed the dead girl had come from a family of stature in the Negro community, which would explain the stonecarver's accelerated service. Vanadium, according to his own words, was a friend of the family; consequently, the father was most likely a police officer.."No," said Vanadium, "you only think you know who I am and what I am, but you don't know anything. That's all right. You'll learn."..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..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..Frankness and tough talk pleased her, because too many people dealt with her as though her spirit were as frail as her limbs. She laughed with delight-but still refused him.."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."..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..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..Junior had expected these singular creatures, and he needed them to be as monstrous as they had always been in the past. Nonetheless, he shrank back against his pillows in dismay when they exploded into the hospital room. Their faces were as fierce as those of painted cannibals coming off a fast. They gestured emphatically, spitting expletives along with tiny bits of lunch dislodged from their teeth by the force of their condemnations..As yet, he hadn't taken either an antiemetic or antihistamine to ward off vomiting and hives, because he wanted to medicate -against those conditions as shortly before the violence as was practical, to ensure maximum protection. He'd intended to dose himself only after he followed Celestina home from the gallery and could be reasonably certain that he had located the lair of Bartholomew.."The Finder" takes place about three hundred years before the time of the novels, in a dark and troubled time; its story casts light on how some of the customs and institutions of the Archipelago came to be. "The Bones of the Earth" is about the wizards who taught the wizard who first taught Ged, and shows that it takes more than one mage to stop an earthquake. "Darkrose and Diamond" might take place at any time during the last couple of hundred years in Earthsea; after all, a love story can happen at any time, anywhere. "On the High Marsh" is a story from the brief but eventful six years that Ged was Archmage of Earthsea. And the last story, "Dragonfly," which takes place a few years after the end of Tehanu, is the bridge between that book and the next one, The Other Wind (to be published soon). A dragon bridge..When Junior cut open a grapefruit for breakfast, he didn't find a quarter in it..He opened his mouth but stood mute. Raised his right hand from his side. Worked his fingers in the air, as though the needed words could be strummed from the ether. He felt stupid, foolish..Junior didn't care which explanation was correct. Only one thing mattered: The Bartholomew hunt was at last nearing an end. On Wednesday, December 27, Junior met Google, the document forger, in a theater, during a matinee of Bonnie and Clyde..Until Nolly, Kathleen's life had been as short on romance as a saltless saltine is short on flavor. Her childhood and even her adolescence were so colorless that she'd settled on dentistry as a career because it seemed, by comparison to what she knew, to be an exotic and exciting profession. She'd dated a few men, but all were boring and none was kind. Ballroom-dancing lessons-and ultimately competitions-promised the romance that dentistry and dating hadn't provided, but even dancing was somewhat a disappointment until her instructor introduced Kathleen to this balding, bull-necked, lumpy, utterly wonderful Romeo..To the open casement window, into the men's room. Still seething with rage. Angrily cranking shut the twin panes while lazy tongues of fog licked through the narrowing gap.."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,.."When Agnes pressed for a diagnosis, Dr. Chan quietly pleaded the need to gather more information. After Barty had seen the oncologist and had additional tests, he and his mother would return here in the afternoon to receive a diagnosis and counseling in treatment options.."I wouldn't just whack anyone, not even a worm bucket like Cain, any more than I would commit suicide. Remember, I believe in eternal consequences.".."I just wanted everyone to come see the spider, that's all. It was a really, really icky interesting bug."..The ghost cop was forty feet behind him, beyond ranks of other pedestrians, every one of whom might as well have been faceless now, smooth and featureless from brow to chin, because suddenly Junior could see no countenance other than that of the walking dead man. The haunting visage bobbed up and down as the grim spirit strode along, vanishing and reappearing and then vanishing again among all the bobbing

and swaying heads of the intervening multitudes.. "You're better at concentrative meditation without seed than anyone I've ever known, better than me. That's why you, especially, should never undertake a long session unsupervised," Chicane scolded. "At the very least, the very least, you should use your electronic meditation timer. I don't see it here, do I?" At home, Agnes had no appetite, but she fixed Barty a cheese sandwich, spooned potato salad into a dish, added a bag of corn chips and a Coke, and served this late dinner on a tray, in his room, where he was already in bed and reading *Tunnel in the Sky*.. Junior locked the door. He started the engine and drove out of the cemetery faster than was prudent on the winding service road.. In spring, summer, and fall, they brightened the grave with the roses that Edom grew in the side yard. In this less rose-friendly season, these Christmas bouquets had been purchased at a flower shop.. Lipscomb said, "We're only two and a half blocks from the best Armenian restaurant in the city. I'll dash over there, bring back some chilled bubbly and an early dinner, if you'll allow me.." "Well, anyway," she said, as though Muffins uncharacteristic viciousness had been adequately explained, "this mending ought to cover ten more lessons." Fifteen feet separated them, with guests intervening. Yet this stranger's attention could have felt no more disturbingly intense to Junior if they had been alone in the room and but a foot apart.." Nick," he suggested, as though any reason existed for her to be on a first-name basis with the man who killed her husband. "I wasn't drinking." He had been stowed in a storeroom of one of the old palaces that Losen had appropriated. It had no window, its door was cross-grained oak barred with iron, and spells had been laid on that door that would have kept a far more experienced wizard captive. There were men of great skill and power in Losen's pay. Hound did not consider himself to be one of them. "All I have is a nose," he said. He came daily to see that Otter was recovering from his concussion and dislocated shoulder, and to talk with him. He was, as far as Otter could see, well-meaning and honest. "If you won't work for us they'll kill you," he said. "Losen can't have fellows like you on the loose. You'd better hire on while he'll take you." This was pathetic. Only thickheaded fools, unschooled and unworldly, would be shaken into confession by ham-handed tactics like these.. EARTHSEA. And here, now, into the kitchen through a door with a porthole in the center. Into sizzle and clatter, into clouds of fried-onion fumes and the mouthwatering aromas of chicken fat and shoestring potatoes turning golden in deep wells of boiling cooking oil.. faiths and inhibiting rules that confused humanity, when he was sufficiently enlightened to believe only in himself, he would be able to trust his instincts, for they would be free of society's toxic views, and he would be assured of success and happiness if always he followed these gut feelings.. He did not answer Hound's question.. Neither guilt nor remorse plagued him. Good and bad, right and wrong, were not issues to him. Actions were either effective or ineffective, wise or stupid, but they were all value neutral.. Two teenage boys and one elderly woman scrambled across the sidewalk, grabbing at the ringing rain of quarters. They caught some, but others bounced and twirled through their grasping fingers, rolling-spinning away into the gutter.. He couldn't remember on what principle he'd considered firing Magusson. In spite of his faults, the attorney was highly competent.. Darkness, the one source of childhood fear that most adults never quite outgrow, held no terror for Barty. Although for a while his bedroom featured a Mickey Mouse night-light, the miniature lamp was there not to soothe the boy, but to quiet his mother's nerves, because she worried about him waking alone, in blackness.. Agnes invited everyone to stay for dinner. The pies were no sooner finished than large cook pots, saucepans, colanders, and other heavy artillery were requisitioned from the Lampion culinary arsenal.. Moving around the front of the station wagon, waving at his mother, reveling in her astonishment, Barty shouted, "Not scary!. Sweet-tempered, generous, honest, kind Naomi had surely been incapable of murdering anyone-least of all the man she loved.." "Wouldn't dream of asking you to make it a habit. Just this one time. If anguish, why not guilt?". 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.. For more than twenty-three years, he'd given his big toe little consideration, had taken it for granted, had treated it with shameful neglect. Now this lower digit seemed precious, a comparatively small fixture of flesh, but as important to his image of himself as his nose or either of his eyes.. He felt so happy, he was improving every day in every way, life just got better-but then something happened that was worse than the shooting.. It ruined his day, his week, the rest of his year.." Honey," Angel said to her daughter, "show us that game you were just playing with Koko. Show us, honey. Come on. Show us. Show us." He wanted to say: The vain, power-mad politicians who milk cheers from ignorant crowds, the sports stars and preening actors who hear themselves called heroes and never object, they should all wither with shame at the mention of your name. Your vision, your struggle, the years of grueling work, your enduring faith when others doubted, the risk you took with career and reputation--it's one of the great stories of science, and I'd be honored if I could shake your band.. Celestina White was the center of attention, always surrounded by champagne-swilling, canape--gobbling bourgeoisie who would have been shopping for paintings on velvet if they'd had less money.. From the corn soup to the baked ham to the plum pudding, he did not speak of his dry walk in wet weather.. By the time he ordered cr?me brulee for dessert, he was able to laugh at himself. Had he expected to see a ghost enjoying a cocktail and free cashews at the bar?. Surprising himself more than anyone, Edom also presented his collection to the university. Out with tornadoes, hurricanes, tidal waves, earthquakes, and volcanoes; bring in the roses. He lightly renovated his small apartment, painted it in brighter colors, and throughout the autumn, he stocked his bookshelves with volumes on horticulture, excitedly planning a substantial expansion of the rosarium come spring.." I love you, Daddy," she said, and put the palms of her hands flat against his temples.." Thank you, Nurse Bressler," he said most solemnly, matching her tone, barely able to control the urge to glance at her, smile, and give her another preview of his quick, pink tongue.." But in 'This Momentous Day,' Bartholomew is just the disciple, the historical figure, and he's also a metaphor for the unforeseen consequences of even our most ordinary actions." Several large Dumpsters hulked nearby, dark rectangles less seen than suggested in the slowly churning murk, like forms in a dream, as

ominous as graveyard sarcophaguses, each as suitable for a musician's carcass as any of the others..The second time, armed with the previously calculated fact that each regular year contains 3,153,600 seconds, and that a leap year contains an additional 86,400, she vetted Barty's answer in only four minutes. Thereafter, she accepted his numbers without verification..When Agnes groaned, one of the shadows spread its wings, moved closer, to the right side of the bed, and resolved into a nurse. Agnes's vision had cleared. The nurse was a pretty young woman with black hair and indigo eyes..People like Enoch Cain, of course, never choose between the right and the wrong thing, but between two evils. For themselves, they create world after world of despair. For others, they make worlds of pain..He thought he heard the soft swoosh of knife-edge wings slicing the January air. He dared not look up. More in his throat. The agony. Darkness poured into his head, as if it were blood rising relentlessly from his flooded stomach and esophagus..With his sister's financial backing, Edom purchased a flower shop in '71, after ascertaining that the strip mall in which it was located had been even more soundly constructed than the earthquake code required, that it didn't stand on slide-prone land, that it did not lie in a flood plain, and that in fact its altitude above sea level ensured that it would survive all but a tidal wave of such towering enormity that nothing less than an asteroid impact in the Pacific could be the cause. In '73, he married Maria Elena (that boy-girl thing, after all), whereupon she became Agnes's sister-in-law in addition to having long been a full sister in her heart. They bought the house on the other side of the original Lampion homestead, and another fence was torn down.. "Paul," she said, "you've got a lovely house, but Celestina and Grace are doers. They need to keep occupied. They'll go stir-crazy if they don't stay busy. Am I right, ladies?"..He visited the bank in which he maintained a safe-deposit box under the John Pinchbeck identity. He withdrew the twenty thousand in cash and retrieved all the forged documents from the box..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..Then it would stop. The torment would stop. Surely. His sense of drift, of sliding aimlessly through the days, would lift from him, and he would find purpose once more in determined self-improvement. He would definitely learn French and German. He would take cooking classes and become a culinary master. Karate, too..With the uniformed troopers was a stocky, late-fortyish, brush-cut man in black slacks and a gray herringbone sports jacket. His face was almost pan flat, his first chin weak, his second chin stronger than the first, and his function unknown to Junior. He would have been the least likely man to be noticed in a ten-thousand-man convention of nonentities, if not for the port-wine birthmark that surrounded his right eye, darkening most of the bridge of his nose, brightening half his forehead, and returning around the eye to stain the upper portion of his cheek.. "This momentous day," Thomas Vanadium said quietly, stiff gazing into the grave, "seems full of terrible endings. But like every day, it's actually full of nothing but beginnings."..Aside from purchasing the T S. Eliot book, which he hadn't found time to read, Junior was only peripherally aware of current events, because they were, after all, current, while he tried always to focus on the future. The news of the day was but a faint background music to him, like a song on a radio in another apartment..An exceptionally attractive woman, alone at the bar, stirred his desire. Glossy black hair: the tresses of night itself, shorn from the sky..As before, the name tolled through him like the ominous note of the deepest bass bell in a cathedral carillon, struck on a cold midnight..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..The lid of the cooler wasn't on as tight as it ought to have been. From around one edge slipped a thin and sinuous stream of smoke. Something on fire..They introduced themselves as Knacker, Hisscus, and Nork, but Junior didn't bother to associate names with faces, partly because the men were so alike in appearance and manner that their own mothers might have had difficulty figuring out which of them to blame for never calling. Besides, he was still tired from his recent ramble through the hospital-and unnerved by the thought of some baleful-eyed Bartholomew prowling the world in search of him.

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