

PURSUED BY THE PAST

nonetheless. The rapist's curse. Healthy, but healthy at the expense of Phimie..A cause now apparent, the fear explained, Agnes held her baby more tightly. So new to the world, he seemed already to be slipping away from her, captured by the whirlpool of a demanding destiny..Frowning at him, she said, "You don't mind them around, do you, Joey? They're eccentric, but I love them very much..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..An outrageously sexy redhead hit on him as he selected from an array of bomb-shaped canapes on a tray held by a waiter dressed as a ragged and soot-smearred blast survivor. Myrtle, the redhead, preferred to be called Scamp, which Junior entirely understood. She wore a DayGlo green miniskirt, a spray-on white sweater, and a green beret..Kitchen staff. All men. Some looked up in surprise; others were oblivious of him. He stalked the cramped work aisles, eyes watering from the fragrant steam and the heat, seeking Vanadium, an answer..Celestina extended her left hand, which shook so badly that she nearly knocked over both their wineglasses. "I will."..After just twenty-one days, the boy's adaptation to blindness was amazing but clearly the gathered audience stood in anticipation of something more remarkable than his unhalting progress and unerring sense of direction..Unsupervised meditation without seed, in sessions longer than an hour, entails risk. To his horror, Junior would discover some of the dangers in September..And like John Kennedy's death, Zedd's passing was cloaked in mystery, inspiring widespread suspicion of conspiracy. Only a few believed that he had committed suicide, and Junior was certainly not one of those gullible fools. Caesar Zedd, author of *You Have a Right to Be Happy*, would never have blown his brains out with a shotgun, as the authorities preferred the public to believe..A few minutes after dawn, in excellent weather, they flew out of Sacramento, bound for Eugene. Junior would have enjoyed the scenery if his face hadn't felt as if it were gripped by a score of white-hot pliers in the hands of the same evil trolls that had peopled all the fairy tales that his mother had ever told him when he was little..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 nurse was in was gone, but Maria remained in attendance. She the vinyl-and-stainless-steel armchair, busy at..He first eased from aisle to aisle, but soon moved more quickly, convinced that the singer would be found beyond the next turn, and then the next. Was that her trailing shadow he had glimpsed, slipping around the corner ahead of him? Her womanly scent lingering in the air after her passage?.."No pie!" Agnes agreed. She parenthesized his head with her hands and punctuated his sweet face with kisses.."Pie, pie, pie, pie, pie, pie, pie, pie," Barty repeated in the same tone of self-satisfied delight that he used when announcing "Barty potty."..After a silent moment of surprise, Nork or Knacker, or Hisscus, said, "Your sentiment is understandable, Mr. Cain, but it's customary in these matters--".honor and family. This was life, and everyone lived his life in the shadow of one solemn obligation or another..In the kitchen, a delicious aroma wafted from the oven. On the stove stood a large pot over a low flame, and nearby was pasta to be added to the water when it came to a boil..Not a door opened in the narrow street. Nobody looked out to see what the noise was. Not till long after the men were gone did some neighbors creep out to comfort Otter's people as best they could. "Oh, it's a curse, a curse, this wizardry!" they said..Like a spring-loaded novelty snake erupting from a can, Junior exploded up from the chair, nearly knocking it over.."When you cut Naomi's string, you put an end to the effects that I her music would have on the lives of others and on the shape of the future. YOU struck a discord that can be heard, however faintly, all the way to the farthest end of the universe."..As though he were home to a species of termites that preferred the taste of men to that of wood, Vanadium felt a squirming in his marrow..hooves. This was no demon child. Its father's evil was'nt visibly reflected in its small..Friday night, mystified and troubled, he hadn't slept much, and each time that he dozed off, he had dreamed of being alone in a bosky woods, stalked by a sinister presence, unseen but undeniable. This predator crept in silence through the underbrush, indistinguishable from the lowering trees among which it glided, as fluid and as cold as moonlight, but darker than the night, gaining on him relentlessly. Each time that he sensed it springing toward him for the kill, Jacob woke, once with Barty's name on his lips, calling out to the boy as though in warning, and once with two words: the knave. . . .room, heavier and colder than the ice bags that were draped across Junior's midsection..Paul was a dear man, different from Joey in appearance but so like him at heart. She shocked him by insisting they go at once to his house, to his bedroom. Red-faced as no pulp hero ever had been, Paul stammered out that he wasn't expecting intimacy of her so soon, and she assured him that he wasn't going to get it so soon, either.."The piece that's intrigued me," Junior revealed, "is the one that's rather like a c-c-candlestick. It's quite different from the others."..Celestina was unable to talk reason to him, and even her mother, Grace, who was living here for the interim and who was always oil on the stormiest of waters, couldn't bring a moment's calm to the velvet squall that was Neddy Gnathic in full blow. He had learned about the baby five days ago, and he had been building force ever since, like a tropical depression aspiring to hurricane status.."You did just fine, Tom, just fine," Agnes said in a consoling tone that she might have used with a boy whose performance, at a piano recital, had been earnest but undistinguished. "We were all quite impressed."..Twilight, nearly gone and purple in the west, inspired a bright violet line along the crest of an incoming bank of bay fog, as though the mist were shot through with a luminous vein of neon, transforming the entire sparkling city into a stylish cabaret just now opening for business. The night, soft as a woman come to dance, carried a steely blade of cold in its black-silk skirts..She proceeded down the shadowy center aisle, genuflected at the chancel railing, and went to the votive rack..He rode up to the third of five floors in the service elevator, which other tenants were permitted to use only when moving in or moving out, or when taking delivery of large items of furniture. Another elevator, at the front of the building, was too public to suit his

purposes..Reflecting upon her son's clever, diligent, and uncomplaining adaptation to darkness, she wished that she had described to him the dazzling sunset under which they had made their journey home. Although her words might have been inadequate to the spectacle, he would have elaborated on them to create a picture in his mind; with his creative skills, the world that he'd lost with his sight might be remade in equal splendor in his imagination.. "He's a wonderful boy, so very bright, so very full of life. Blindness will be hard, but it won't be the end. He'll cope without the light. It'll be so difficult at first, but this boy ... eventually he'll thrive." On the morning in August that Agnes came home from Dr. Joshua Nunn's office with the results of tests and with a diagnosis of acute myeloblastic leukemia, she asked that everyone pack up and caravan, not to deliver pies, but to visit an amusement park. She wanted to ride the roller coaster, spin on the Tilt-A-Whirl, and mostly watch the children laugh. She intended to store up the memory of Barty's laughter as he had stored up the sight of her face in advance of the surgery to remove his eyes..In the kitchen again, Junior spread the blanket on the floor, to one side of the blood. He rolled Vanadium onto the blanket, and drew the ends of it together, fashioning a sled with which to drag the detective out of the house.. "You could also dream of bananas," Celestina suggested as she turned down the bedclothes.. "There's nothing here for you," she said, stepping back from the door in order to close it.. Fortunately, the chill fog didn't bum away from the Mercedes, considering that it facilitated the stalking of Celestina. The mist swaddled the white Buick in which she rode, increasing the chances that Junior might lose track of her, but it also cloaked the Mercedes and all but ensured that she and her friend wouldn't realize that the pair of headlights behind them were always those of the same vehicle.. Deciduous black oaks lined the street. All were leafless at this time of year, gnarled limbs clawing at the moon.. HAVING COMPLETED HER English lesson, Maria Elena Gonzalez went home with a plastic shopping bag full of precisely damaged clothes and a smaller, paper bag containing cherry muffins for her two girls.. If her beautiful son was to be a prodigy of any kind, she would thank God for his talent and would do anything she could to help him achieve his destiny.. you greater strength and determination than any other motive. But you should know this much.... You need to keep her safe for another reason. She's special. I don't want to explain why she's special or how I know that she is, because this isn't the time or place, not with your dad's death and Wally in the hospital and you still shaky from the attack." "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." Dr. Walter Lipscomb's fingers were longer and more supple than the pianist's, and he had the presence of a great symphony conductor for whom a raised baton was superfluous, who commanded attention by the mere fact of his entry. A tower of authority and self-possession, he said to the becalmed Neddy, "I am this child's physician. She was born underweight and held in hospital to cure an ear infection. You sound as if you have an incipient case of bronchitis that will manifest in twenty-four hours, and I'm sure you wouldn't want to be responsible for this baby being endangered by viral disease." Apparently, he'd been drooling for a long time. Where his chin and throat were not sticky, a crust of dried saliva glazed his skin.. The tenderness with which Grace acceded to Phimie's desire, at the expense of her own peace of mind, filled Celestina with emotion. She'd always admired and loved her mother to an extent that no words-or work of art-could adequately describe, but never more than now.. 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.. And the mills of capitalism provide them. Supply meets demand. Fantasy becomes a commodity, an industry.. "Who else? I think there's romance in the air. The cow-eyed way he looks at her, she could knock his knees out from under him just by giving him a wink." Could any spell of magic make, 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.. "Sit down, sit down," Agnes urged. "I can offer coffee now and pie in a little bit." IN HIS FORD VAN filled with needlepoint and Sklent and Zedd, Junior Cain-Pinchbeck to the world-left the Bay Area by a back door. He took State Highway 24 to Walnut Creek, which might or might not have walnuts, but which offered a mountain and a state park named for the devil: Mount Diablo. State Highway 4 to Antioch brought him to a crossing of the river delta west of Bethel Island. Bethel, for those who had taken good advanced courses in vocabulary improvement, meant "sacred place." Joey was standing just outside, gazing in at her. His blue eyes were seas where sorrow sailed.. Google didn't realize that he was an object of disgust. He wiggled his eyebrows in what he evidently assumed to be an expression of male camaraderie, and he nudged Junior with one elbow.. The search for Cain was secondary. Getting to the revolver took Priority. Regain the gun and then proceed room by haunted room to hunt him down. Hunt him down, if he was here. And if Cain didn't do the hunting first.. NOT IN A MOOD to garden, but wearing the proper gloves, Junior clicked on the foyer light, the hall light, the kitchen light, and stepped around the clubbed-smothered-shot nurse, to the range, where he switched on the right oven, in which an unfinished pot roast was cooling, and the left oven, in which the dinner plates waited to be warmed. He cranked up a flame again under the pot of water that had been boiling earlier-and glanced hungrily at the uncooked pasta that Victoria had weighed and set aside.. "Two weeks to go. I'm not going to miss that. I've cleared all appointments off my calendar." Three times, the singing faded away, but twice, just when he thought that she had finished, she began to croon again. The third time, the silence lasted.. Saturday and Sunday, between. sessions with the directory, Junior cruised around the county on a

series of pleasure drives-testing the theory that the maniac cop was no longer following him. Apparently, Simon Magusson was correct: The case had been closed..Earlier, the dirty-sheet clouds had been wrung dry. Now, the trees that overhung the house had finally stopped dripping on the cedar shingled roof The night was so still that Agnes could hear the sea softly breaking upon the shore more than half a mile away..In Maria's kitchen, still just four days past Christmas, Agnes let dissolve her stoic mask, and wept at last..The moment he had seen the building in which Nolly maintained an office-an aged three-story brick structure in the North Beach district, a seedy strip club occupying the ground floor-Junior knew he'd found the breed of snoop he needed. The detective was at the top of six flights of narrow stairs-no elevator-at the end of a dreary hallway with worn linoleum and with walls mottled by stains of an origin best left unconsidered. The air smelled of cheap disinfectant, stale cigarette smoke, stale beer, and dead hopes..Escorting her home didn't require either a car or a long walk, because she lived upstairs in the hotel where he'd had dinner. The top three floors of the building featured enormous owner-occupied apartments..He either detected their well-concealed surprise or assumed they would be curious as to why, in spite of extensive surgery, he still wore this Boris Karloff face.. "You feel remorse, though," said Agnes. "I can see you do. And not just because of what happened to your hands."..Third, Celestina had a daughter. Not a boy named Bartholomew. Seraphim's baby had been a girl. Named Angel. This confused Junior as much as it stunned him.. "That's just ... an old joke," she heard herself saying, as from a distance. "You didn't really walk between the drops?"..Phimie's speech had been slurred later, as well, immediately following the birth of the baby, when she had struggled to convey her desire to name her daughter Angel..Then Agnes said, "Well, it's clear to me that you won't be able to talk out your life in just one year. Should be a two-year grant."..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?"..With Naomi, sex had been glorious, because they were bonded on multiple levels, all deeper than the mere physical. They had been so close, so emotionally and intellectually entwined, that in making love to her, he'd been making love to himself; and he would never experience a greater intimacy than that..He spat on his right thumb, scrubbed the thumb against one of the dried drips on the floor, rubbed thumb and forefinger together, and brought the freshened spoor to his nose. He smelled blood..At the mention of her son's name, Agnes stiffened. There were numerous ways for Deed to have learned the baby's name, yet it seemed wrong for him to know it, wrong to use it, the name of this child he had nearly orphaned, had almost killed..Fortunately, at least the desk was cigarette-scarred, because it came with the office. It had been the property of a skip-tracer named Otto Zelm, who'd made a good living at the kind of work Nolly avoided out of boredom: tracking down deadbeats and repossessing their vehicles. On a stakeout, Zelm fell asleep in his car, while smoking, thereby triggering the payoff of both life- and casualty-insurance policies, and freeing the lease on this furnished space..Moving out of the doorway, into the bedroom, he said, "What book would that be?"..He was about to lift the body out of the chair when he heard the car in the driveway. He might not have caught the sound of the engine so distinctly and so early if the stereo had not been in the process of changing albums..Holding the mug in his right hand, Tom picked up the coin and rolled it across the knuckles of his left. Paul's quarter, after all. A two-bit temptation to panic. As gifted with physical grace as with good looks, Junior stepped into the bedroom doorway, lithely and with feline stealth. He leaned against the jamb..Junior gave the Raisinets to him, and Google left the theater with his candy and his cash..Tom Vanadium liked this man at once. Cop instinct told him that Damascus was honest and reliable. Priestly insight suggested even more impressive qualities..Raising his revolver, Tom squeezed off two shots, but the gun didn't discharge.. "Supposing he's senile, wouldn't he possibly think you were his long- lost brother or someone?".. "Tame him or bury him," said Losen, and turned to more important matters..Curious to know what Neddy had said, Junior quickly approached the same gallery staffer. "Excuse me, but I've been looking for my friend ever so long in this mob, and then I saw him talking to you-the gentleman in the London Fog and the tux-and now I've lost him again. He didn't say if he was leaving, did he? He's my ride home."..Although the only light on the back porch came from the pale beams that filtered out through the curtains on the kitchen windows, all these faces seemed luminous, almost preternaturally aglow, like the kiln-fired countenances of saints in a dark church, lit solely by the flames of votive candies. The rain-a music of sorts, and the jasmine and incense, and the moment sacred..Tom was aware that something had happened here during the past week, an important development that Celestina mentioned on the phone but that she declined to discuss. He didn't harbor any expectations of what he'd find when she escorted him and Wally into the Lampion dining room, but if he'd tried to imagine the scene awaiting him, he wouldn't have pictured a s?ance..Uncle Jacob, cook and baby-sitter and connoisseur of watery death, cleaned off the table and washed the dishes while Barty patiently endured a rambling postbreakfast conversation with Pixie Lee and with Miss Velveeta Cheese, whose name wasn't an honorary tide earned by winning a beauty contest sponsored by Kraft Foods, as he had first thought, but who, according to Angel, was the "good" sister to the rotten lying cheese man in the television commercials..She was not going to be as forthright with Barty as she had insisted that Joshua Nunn be with her, in part because she was too shaken to risk forthrightness..In his mind's eye, he saw the answering machine with uncanny clarity. That curious gadget. Sitting atop the scarred pine desk..The only bad moment in the evening came when the pianist played "Someone to Watch over Me."..Although she would have felt ridiculous phrasing this question in these words to any other three-year-old, no better way existed to ask it of her special son: "Kiddo ... do you realize you're speaking of your dad in the present tense?"..With his empty sockets draped by unsupported lids, Barty rode home wearing padded eye patches under sunglasses, his cane propped against the seat at his side, as though he were costumed for a role in a play filled with a Dickensian amount of childhood suffering..The January air was crisp, fragrant with evergreens and with the faint salty scent of the distant sea. A curiously yellow moon glowered like a malevolent eye, studying him from between ragged ravelings of dirty clouds..He

waited for Otter to nod, but Otter stood motionless. The following morning, he canceled his German lessons. It was an impossible language. The words were enormously long. A cold wind raised a haunting groan as it harried itself around and around in the bronze hollow of the bell atop the church steeple, shook dead needles from the evergreens, and resisted Paul's progress with what seemed to be malicious intent. Miles ago, between the towns of Brookings and Pistol River, he had decided that he wouldn't again walk this far north at this time of year, even if the guidebooks did claim that the Oregon coast was a comparatively temperate zone in winter. The first time, she required a pencil, paper, and nine minutes to calculate the number of elapsed seconds since an event that had occurred 125 years, six months, and eight days in the past. Her answer differed from his, but while proofing her numbers, she realized that she had forgotten to factor in leap years. Snapping the cylinder into place, he rose to his feet. Already he had a new plan, and the cop's revolver was the most important tool that he required to implement it. He needed to keep moving, conduct the search, find the watch, and get the hell out of here, but he couldn't stop staring at the musician. Something about the cadaver made him nervous—aside from the fact that it was dead and disgusting and, if he was caught with it, a one-way ticket to the gas chamber. Knacker, Hisscus, and Nork, all talking at once, then failing silent as if they were a single organism, then talking in rotation but interrupting one another, tried to advance their agenda. This claim wasn't true. His father, an unsuccessful artist and highly successful alcoholic, lived in Santa Monica, California. His mother, divorced when Junior was four, had been committed to an insane asylum twelve years ago. He rarely saw them. He hadn't told Naomi about them. Neither of his parents was a resume enhancer. Dr. Leland Daines, Celestina's internist, arrived directly from dinner at the Ritz-Carlton. Although Dairies had receding white hair and a seamed face, time had been kind enough to make him look not so much old as dignified. Long in practice, he was nevertheless free of arrogance, soft-spoken and with a bottomless supply of patience. Around the dinner table, the adults applauded, but the tougher audience squinted at the ceiling, toward which she believed the coin had arced, then at the table, where it ought to have fallen among the water glasses or in her creamed corn. At last she looked at Tom and said, "Not magic." By lunch, he had turned the final page, and he was so full of the tale that he seemed to have no room for food. While his mother kept reminding him to eat, he regaled her with the details of John Thomas Stuart's great adventures with LummoX, as though every word that Heinlein had written were not science fiction, but truth. 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. The decision had already been made that Grace would move in with Celestina and then—following the wedding—with Celestina and Wally. In Spruce Hills, she had dear friends whom she would miss, but there was nothing else in Oregon to draw her back, other than the narrow plot beside Harrison, where she expected eventually to be buried. The parsonage fire had destroyed all her personal effects and every family treasure from Celestina's grade-school spelling-bee medals to the last precious photograph. She wanted only to be close to her one remaining daughter and her granddaughter, to be part of the new life that they would build with Wally Lipscomb. As the nurse slapped a bar of lye soap in Celestina's right hand, she turned on the water in the sink. As punctilious as you might expect any good accountant to be, Bartholomew Prosser didn't delay long enough to make it necessary for Junior to ring the bell twice. The porch light came on. One problem: Nolly Wulfstan, Quasimodo without a hump, probably repaired to this convenient club after work, to down a few beers, because this was surely as close as he would ever get to a halfway attractive woman. The detective would think that he and Junior were here for the same reason—to gawk at nearly naked babes and store up enough images of bobbling breasts to get through the night—and he would not be able to comprehend that for Junior the attraction was the dance, the intellectual thrill of experiencing a new cultural phenomenon. Shopping for fashion accessories relaxed Junior. He spent a few hours browsing for tie chains, silk pocket squares, and unusual belts. Riding the up escalator in a department store, between the second and