

MARGIES POCKET POSH JOURNAL CHEVRON

Neither of them needed to confirm their mutual attraction with even so much as an additional nod or a smile. Victoria knew, as he did, that their time would come, when all this current unpleasantness was behind them, when Vanadium had been thwarted, when all suspicion had been forever laid to rest. "I'm not going anywhere," she pledged. She had realized that his voice was growing heavy with sleep. "But it's time for you to go to dreamland." With a cry of alarm, he bolted to the bathroom and made it with not a second to spare. He seemed to be on the throne long enough to have witnessed the rise and fall of an empire. 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. The masterpiece that Junior purchased was small, a sixteen-inch-square canvas, but it cost twenty-seven hundred dollars. The entire picture-titled *The Cancer Lurks Unseen, Version 1*-was flat black, except for a small gnarled mass, bile-green and pus-yellow, in the upper-right quadrant. Worth every penny. Through the big window beyond her, the charry branches of the massive oak tree formed a black cat's cradle against the sky, leaves quivering slightly, as though nature herself trembled in trepidation of what Junior Cain might do. From childhood, Celestina was encouraged to be confident that life had meaning, and when she'd needed to share that belief with Dr. Lipscomb as he struggled to come to terms with his experience in the operating room, she'd done so without hesitation. Strangely, however, she herself was having difficulty absorbing these two small miracles. Maybe he went a little crazy then. He wouldn't deny a brief, transient madness. In the front seat, Edom and Jacob murmured agreement with the narrator's sentiments. Monday night, Edom and Jacob booked adjoining units in a motel near the hospital. They called Barty's room to give Agnes the phone number and to report that they had inspected eighteen establishments before finding one that seemed comparatively safe. When Agnes turned her head and saw Maria Elena Gonzalez, she thought she must be dreaming again. Beyond the window, behind veils of rain and fog, the metropolis appeared to be more enigmatic than Stonehenge, as unknowable as any city in our dreams. Agnes held a smile as best she could, determined that her son's final glimpse of her face would not leave him with a memory of her despair. 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?" "August, 1931. Along the Huang He River in China. Three million seven hundred thousand people died in a great flood," Edom said. Altogether by taking slow deep breaths, slow deep breaths, and by remembering that each of us has a right to be happy, to be fulfilled, to be free of fear. He yearned for a new heart mate. He was wise enough to know that no amount of yearning could transform the wrong woman into the right one. Love couldn't be demanded, planned, or manufactured. Love always came as a surprise, snuck up on you when you were least expecting it, like Anthony Perkins in a dress. The musician's eyes met Junior's for an instant, widening with surprise. Obviously he knew that Gammoner was a lie. So he must be aware of Junior's real identity. "I only told you about that," said Grace, "because it was a very handsome shirt, and I thought you might want to get one for Wally." Maria looked stricken when she answered the doorbell, for she intuited that a visit, instead of a call, meant the worst. "At home," Otter said. It wasn't a lie. He did have a pouch at home. He kept his fine-work tools and his bubble level in it. And he wasn't altogether lying about the wind. Several times he had managed to bring a bit of magewind into the sail of a boat, though he had no idea how to combat or control a storm, as a ship's weatherworker must do. But he thought he'd rather drown in a gale than be murdered in this hole. With no job to return to, he dawdled over lunch. He was actually tumescent with a growing sense of freedom that was as thrilling as sex. "Me, I don't like anything old. This White chick's got a weird thing for old people, old buildings, old stuff in general. Like she doesn't realize she's young. You want to grab her, shake her, and say, 'Hey, let's move on,' you know?" 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. Something was due to happen in this peculiar, extended, almost casual haunting under which he had suffered for more than two years, since finding the quarter in his cheeseburger. While all around him in the streets, people bustled in good cheer, Junior slouched along in a sour mood, temporarily having forgotten to look for the bright side. Throughout the day, he tried not to think about the four knaves. But he was an obsessive, of course, so in spite of all his trying, he did not succeed. 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 hospital room was softly lighted, and shadows roosted on all sides like a flock of slumbering birds. His severed toe lay across the room, on the white tile floor. It stuck up stiffly, nail gleaming, as if the floor were snow and the toe were the only exposed extremity of a body buried in a drift. Studying the brochure, Junior felt that the best response to this artist's work was to go directly into the bathroom, stick one finger down his throat, and purge himself. Considering his medical history, however, he couldn't afford to be such an expressive critic. Vanadium sat in the chair, watching. With the perfect control of a sleight-of-hand artist, he turned a quarter end-over-end across the knuckles of his right hand, palmed it with his thumb, caused it to reappear at his little finger, and rolled it across his knuckles again, ceaselessly. When Agnes woke at 1:50 A.M., she was in the grip of a vague apprehension for which she couldn't identify a source. Yet the most enduring relationship he had all year was with the ghostly singer. On February 18, he returned home in the afternoon, from a class in spirit channeling, and heard singing as he opened his front door. That same voice. And the same hateful song. As faint as before, repeatedly rising and falling. 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.. "I find you more than adequate in all ways that count. Besides, Joey was a generous and good lover. What he taught me, I can share." She smiled. "You'll find that I'm a darn good teacher, and I sense in you a star pupil." She loosened her hair and brushed it out, and Nolly took her to dinner at their favorite place, which had the decor of a classy saloon and a bay view suitable for God's table. They came here often enough that the maitre d' greeted them by name, as did their waiter.. As long as Junior continued to fake sleep, the cop couldn't be absolutely sure that any deception was taking place.. He couldn't much longer take advantage of Paul Damascus's hospitality. Since bringing Wally to town, Tom had been staying in Paul's guest bedroom. He knew that he was welcome indefinitely, and the sense of family that he'd found with these people had only grown since January, but he nevertheless felt that he was imposing.. Surprised, Tom leaned in his chair to look more directly at the blind boy. On the telephone, Celestina had mentioned only that Barty was a prodigy, which didn't quite explain the aptness of the oak-tree metaphor.. Otter hesitated and said, "Yes." 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.. She wouldn't answer him, but he was as convinced by her silence as he would have been by a blurted confession--or by a denial, for that matter. Her wild eyes convinced him, too, and her trembling mouth. Naomi had come back to be with him, and it could be argued that Seraphim had returned in a sense, too, for this girl was the flesh of Seraphim's flesh, born out of her death.. 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 dying-dove hands fluttered down Junior's arms, plucking feebly at his leather coat, and at last hung limp at Neddy's sides.. Nellie found the strength to rise, but having risen, she was unable to speak. Her mouth shaped words, but her voice deserted her.. Maria said, "It is ... the only thing ... I can do for him now, for you. I be nobody, not.. Celestina finally zipped shut the satchel. "You better watch out for the big bad wolf." The minister had finished. The service was over. No one came to Junior with condolences, because they would see him again shortly, at the Ford dealership buffet.. Cops at the doorstep, the lunatic bitch with the chair, the clergyman's curse--all this amounted to more than even a committed man could handle. Get out of the present, go for the future.. "It's what?" asked the detective, for with the exception of his teeth, he was not a self-improved individual.. "Take care he doesn't turn your belt on you with a spell!" said his uncle.. Embarrassed, Kathleen stopped singing, but to the other woman, Nolly said, "It is a lovely voice, isn't it? Haunting, I think." 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.. 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.. 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." Candle flames blurred into bright smears, and the faces of her good parents shimmered like the half-seen countenances of angels in dreams.. So quick, this violence, over even as it began. Because he had no interest in aftermath, however, Junior suffered no disappointment at the briefness of the thrill. The past was past, and as he closed the front door and stepped around the body, he focused on the future.. He couldn't remember on what principle he'd considered firing Magusson. In spite of his faults, the attorney was highly competent.. Even above the piston-knock of her heart and the bellows-wheeze of her breath, Celestina heard wood crack, a small pane of glass explode, and metal torque with a squeal. The creep was going to get away.. In the hall that served the two ground-floor apartments, they encountered Rena Moller, the elderly woman who lived in the unit across from theirs. She was polishing the dark wood of her front door with lemon oil, a sure sign that her son and his family were coming to dinner.. More than twice, worried nurses--and even a resident internist braved the tumult to check on Junior's condition. They asked if he really felt up to entertaining visitors, these visitors.. Taking her mother's advice to heart, Celestina sighed. "All right. Let's just pray they catch him. But if they don't ... two weeks, and then the rest of the plan, the way you said, Tom. Except that I can't tolerate two weeks--in a hotel, cooped up, afraid to go into the streets, no sun, no fresh air." 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 third-floor apartment directly over Enoch Cain's unit had been leased by Simon Magusson, through his corporation, ever since it became available in March of '66, twenty-two months ago.. Furrowing her brow and narrowing her eyes as though prepared to scold him, she slowly lowered her face to his, until their noses were touching, and she whispered, "Because it's more fun if it's secret." "If you don't, your feeling gland isn't working. Want me to read you to sleep?" Paul recalled the letter he had written to Reverend Harrison White a couple weeks after the death of Joey Lampion. He'd carried it home from the pharmacy on the day that Perri died, to ask for her opinion of it. The letter had never been mailed.. The cop had picked up the .22 pistol, using a pencil through the trigger guard, to prevent the destruction of fingerprints.. "We'll need to talk about this a lot in the days to come, as we both have more time to think about it." While the horse and then the sheep grazed twelve months each, an H-bomb accidentally fell from a B-52 and was lost in the ocean, off Spain, for two months before being located. Mao Tse-tung launched his Cultural Revolution, killing thirty million people to improve Chinese society. James Meredith, civil rights activist, was wounded by gunfire during a march in Mississippi. In Chicago, Richard Speck murdered eight nurses in a row-house dormitory, and a month later, Charles Whitman limbed a tower at the University of Texas, from which he shot and killed twelve people. Arthritis forced Sandy Koufax, star pitcher for the Dodgers, to retire. Astronauts Grissom, White, and Chaffee died earthbound, in a flash fire that swept their Apollo spacecraft during a full-scale launch simulation. Among the noted who traded fame

for eternity were Walt Disney, Spencer Tracy, saxophonist John Coltrane, writer Carson McCullers, Vivien Leigh, and Jayne Mansfield. Junior bought McCullers's *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, and though he didn't doubt that she was a fine writer, her work proved to be too weird for his taste. During these years, the world was rattled by earthquakes, swept by hurricanes and typhoons, plagued by floods and droughts and politicians, ravaged by disease. And in Vietnam, hostilities were still underway..He swept the immediate area with the flashlight, and shadows spun with shadows, waltzing spirits in the ballroom of the night..Barty sat at the kitchen table, reading *Between Planets*. From time to time, Agnes discovered him watching her at work or studying Maria's face and her dexterous hands..Celestina, the battering Baptist, back in action, came at him again. With one leg broken, another cracked, and the stretcher bar splintered, the chair wasn't as formidable a weapon as it had been. She swung it, Junior dodged, she struck at him again, he juked, and she reeled away from him, gasping..terrified, the thorns pricking so close to his eyes, green points combing his lashes. He's too weak to resist, disabled."Good day, sir," Lipscomb said, closing the door in Neddy's face, possibly compressing his nose and bruising his boutonniere..The detective was driven by this string theory of his, and maybe he also saw visions or even heard voices, like Joan of Arc. Joan of Arc with out beauty or grace, Joan of Arc with a service revolver and the authority to.In the face of his kindness, however, she couldn't refuse his request. She nodded..With the salt and pepper shakers, Tom walked them through the why-I'm-not-sad-about-my-face explanation that he'd given to Angel ten days previously..body on the flight out of San Francisco. When finally her obligations were met, she.From his first birthday to his third, Barty made worthless all the child-care and child-development books that a first-time mother relied on to know what to expect of her offspring, and when. Barty grew and coped and learned according to his own clock.."You didn't at all," Dr. Salk assured him. "I need to talk to you. If you would give me a little of your time..." "Why are you here?" "Where else I should be and for why? I watch you over." As the tears cleared from Agnes's eyes, she saw that Maria was sewing. A shopping bag stood to one side of the chair, and to the other side, open on the floor, a case contained spools of thread, needles, a pincushion, a pair of scissors, and other supplies of a seamstress's trade..Standard decks of playing cards are machine packed, always in the same order, according to suits. You can absolutely count on the fact that each deck you open will be assembled in precisely the same order as every other deck you have ever opened or ever will open..Because the upper part of the hospital bed was somewhat raised, he didn't have to lift his head from the pillow to study the corner where the phantom waited. He peered beyond the IV rack, past the foot of the.Stepping into her digs was like passing through a time machine into another century, traveling in space, as well, to the Europe of Louis XIV. The expansive, high-ceilinged rooms overwhelmed the eye with the rich somber colors and the heavy forms of Baroque art and furniture. Shells, acanthus leaves, volutes, garlands, and scrolls-often gilded decorated the museum-quality antique Bombay chests, chairs, tables, massive mirrors, cabinets, and etageres..Fear of the unknown is a weakness, for it presumes dimensions to life beyond human control. Zedd teaches that nothing is beyond our control, that nature is just a mindlessly grinding machine with no more mysteries in it than we will find in applesauce.."So where he threw the quarter," Barty said, as Angel listened intently and nodded her head, "wasn't really into Gunsmoke, 'cause that's not a place, it's just a show. See, maybe he threw it into a place where I'm not blind, or into a place where he doesn't have that messed-up face, or a place where for some reason you never came here today. There's more places than anybody could ever count, even me, and I can count pretty good. That's what you feel, right-all the ways things are?"..The spectral singer didn't exhibit her blood-and-bone sisters' reluctance to pursue her man..THE DEAD DETECTIVE, grinning in the moonlight, a pair of silvery quarters gleaming in the sockets once occupied by his eyes..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..Filled with the songs of swallows that evidently preferred these precincts to the more famous address of San Juan Capistrano, this mild March morning was perfect for pie deliveries. Agnes and Grace had produced a bakery's worth of glorious vanilla-almond pies and coffee toffee pies..Outside, flames churned to the left and right of the opening. The front of the house was afire..than the left: slack yet with a pulled look. The left eyelid drooped. That side of her..With his ringleted yellow hair, coiled mustache, and haughty right file, this was a jack that looked as if he might be a knave in the worst sense of the word..A matronly nurse arrived, alerted to the patient's return to consciousness by the telemetry device associated with the heart monitor..Thursday evening, his third in the hotel, he returned to the lounge for cocktails and another steak. The same tuxedoed pianist provided the entertainment..When the subject shifted to card tricks and fortune-telling, Maria admitted to practicing divination with standard playing cards..In the glamorous cocktail lounge of this elegant hotel, Junior was necessarily forced to use other of Zedd's techniques-and more brandy--to liberate from his subconscious the name of the caller on the Ansaphone. Max. The caller had said, It's Max..Instead, she saw Phimie reborn. She saw, as well, a child endangered. Somewhere out there was a rapist capable of extreme cruelty and violence, a man who would--if Phimie was correct--react unpredictably if ever he learned of his."I'm not sure which is more unusual-the site of the eruption, the number of boils, or the size of them."..The telephone rang, putting an end to their chat, but Agnes would remember the substance of it later that year, on the day before Christmas, when Barty took a walk in the rain and changed forever his..Magusson was a small man behind a huge desk. His head appeared too large for his body, but his ears seemed no bigger than a pair of silver dollars. Large protuberant eyes, bulging with shrewdness and feverish with ambition, marked him as one who'd be hungry a minute after standing up from a daylong feast. A button nose too severely turned up at the tip, an upper lip long enough to rival that of an orangutan, and a mean slash of a mouth completed a portrait sure to repel any woman with eyesight; but if you

wanted an attorney who was angry at the world for having been cursed with ugliness and who could convert that anger into the energy and ruthlessness of a pit bull in the courtroom, even while using his unfortunate looks to gain the jurors' sympathy, then Simon Magusson was the counselor for you. The reception was from six o'clock to eight-thirty. If she were to arrive on time, guardian angels would have to be perched on all the traffic lights along the way. Later, weak and shaken, as he was packing his suitcase, the urge overcame him again. He was astonished to discover that anything could be left in his intestinal tract. Because he genuinely liked women and hoped always to please them, always to be discreet and chivalrous and giving, Junior did as she wished, spinning a vivid account of the grisly vengeance he would take if ever Seraphim told anyone what he'd done to her. Vlad the Impaler, the historical inspiration for Brain Stoker's Dracula--thank you, Book-of-the-Month Club--could not have imagined bloodier or more horrific tortures and mutilations than those that Junior promised to visit upon the reverend, his wife, and Seraphim herself. Pretending to terrorize the girl excited him, and he was perceptive enough to see that she was equally excited by pretending to be terrorized. To Edom, humanity was obviously not the greater of these two destructive forces. Men and women were part of nature, not above it, and their evil was, therefore, just one more example of nature's malignant intent. They had stopped debating this issue years ago, however, neither man conceding any credibility to the other's dogma. He jammed the 9-mm pistol under his belt, grabbed Ichabod by the feet, and dragged him quickly toward the door to Apartment 1. Smears of blood brightened the pale limestone floor in the wake of the body. A speeding truck passed, stirring the fog, and the white broth churned past the car windows, a disorienting swirl. Junior glimpsed Vanadium first in profile and then, as the cop rode down and away, only the back of his head. He hadn't seen this man in almost three years, yet he was instantly certain that this was no coincidental look-alike. Here went the filthy-scabby-monkey spirit itself. Yet when he put her down in the upstairs hall, she cried out for her husband--"Harry!"--and tried to plunge once more into the narrow stairwell. She slept for a while, waking to a prayer spoken softly but fervently in Spanish. A blood test might prove that Junior was the father. Accusations might sooner or later be made against him by bitter and hate-filled members of her family, perhaps not even with the hope of sending him to prison, but solely for the purpose of getting their hands on a sizable part of his fortune, in the form of child support. Celestina's question had been about Phimie, but they had told her about the baby, and she was alarmed by their evasion. The old man assumed the solemn and knowing expression of one guarding mysteries, a sphinx without headdress and mane. "If I told you, dear lady, it wouldn't be magic anymore. Merely a trick." "I'm a healer, not a prosecutor. I'm not in the habit of making accusations, especially not against my own patients."--nor cruel, nor hateful, nor envious, nor mean," Phimie recited, "for all these are sicknesses of this fallen world." "Mommy, did you know, every day on Mars is thirty-seven minutes and twenty-seven seconds longer than ours?" Tom plucked the quarter off the glass, folded it into his right fist, and then at once opened his hand, which was now empty. Regrettably, he had no choice but to conclude that she hadn't made up her mind whether to keep the baby or to seek out an illegal abortion without Junior's approval. She had been thinking about scraping his child out of her womb without even telling him. "Vomiting. I'm told it was an exceptionally violent emetic episode." "He spewed like a fire hose," Vanadium said matter-of-factly. Dear Lord, how she loved her sugarpie, her little M&M. Three years had passed in what seemed like a month, and although there had been stress and struggle, too few hours in every day, less time for her art than she would have liked, and little or no time for herself, she wouldn't have traded being blindsided by motherhood for any amount of wealth, not for anything in the world ... except to have Phimie back. Angel was the moon, the sun, the stars, and all the comets streaking through infinite galaxies: an ever-shining light. Jell-O were served to Agnes Lampion as, on farms farther inland from the coast, roosters still crowed and plump hens clucked contentedly atop their early layings. 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. The sound-suppressor didn't render the pistol entirely silent, but the three soft reports, each like a quiet cough muffled by a hand, wouldn't have carried beyond the hallway. The receptionist, Rebecca, had stayed late, just to keep company with Barty in the waiting room. As she settled into a chair beside the boy, he asked her if she knew what gravity was on Mars, and when she confessed ignorance, he said, "Only thirty-seven percent what it is here. You can really jump on Mars." This time, he vowed never to kill again, except in self-defense, regardless of the provocation. This tougher condition pleased him. No one achieved significant self-improvement by setting low standards for himself. "When you didn't answer the doorbell, man, I just knew what must have happened," Chicane told Junior. Nolly adored her laugh, so musical and girlish. He would have made all sorts of a fool out of himself, anytime, just to hear it. From the moment the girl was admitted on the evening of January 5, the nurses at St. Mary's Hospital in San Francisco called her Phimie, too, not because they knew her well enough to love her, but because that was the name they heard Celestina use. The five tales in this book explore or extend the world established by the first four Earthsea novels. Each is a story in its own right, but they will profit by being read after, not before, the novels. "Where did it go?" Grace asked her granddaughter, making as much effort as she could to lighten the mood for the girl's sake. She herself had been too nervous to eat anything. She'd held the same glass of untasted champagne throughout the evening, clutching it as though it were a mooring buoy that would prevent her from being swept away in a storm. Enigmatic as ever on this subject, he continued: "I'm probably not blind more places than I am. Yeah, sure, I'd rather be me in one of the other places where my eyes are good, but this is the me I am. And you know what?" An unfortunately bumpy ride for the deceased: along the hallway, through the foyer, across the entry threshold, down the porch steps, across a lawn dappled with pine shadows and yellow moonlight, to the graveled driveway. No complaints. "That's the roaster tower,"

said Licky. "Where they cook the cinnabar to get the metal from it. Roasters die in a year or two. Where to, dowser?". Solitude, however, was his preference. He found the sympathy of friends unbearable, a constant reminder that Perri was gone. "Another year," Edom said, "and instead of me, Barty can drive the car for you." 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. Orange firelight bloomed in the living room below, a wave of heat washed over Paul, and immediately behind the heat came greasy masses of roiling black smoke, drawn to the stairwell as to a flue. He was entombed in one of those memorial walls, well above ground level, where nothing was likely to seep into them. Agnes considered describing the sunset to the blinded boy, but her hesitancy settled into reluctance, and by the time the stars came out, she had said not a word about the day's splendid final act. For one thing, she worried that her description would fall far short of the reality, and that with her inadequate words, she might dull Barty's precious memories of sunsets he had seen. Primarily, however, she failed to remark on the spectacle because she was afraid that to do so would be to remind him of all that he had lost. The poor girl's blood pressure soared in spite of the medication. She suffered a violent seizure. Eleven days had passed since Wally stopped three bullets. He still had a little residual weakness in his arms, grew tired more easily than before he'd wound up on the wrong end of a pistol, complained of stiffness in his muscles, and used a cane to keep his full weight off his wounded leg. The rest of the medical care he required, as well as physical rehabilitation, could be had in Bright Beach as well as in San Francisco. By March, he should be back to normal, assuming that the definition of normal included massive scars and an internal hollow space where once his spleen had been. 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. Nevertheless, Junior was thrilled to hear the name Bartholomew, and to know that the boy of whom Celestina spoke was the Bartholomew of Bartholomews, the menacing presence in his unremembered dream, the threat to his fortune and future that must be eliminated. Victoria Bressler lay on the floor of the small foyer, left arm extended past her head, palm revealed, as though she were waving at the ceiling, right arm across her body in such a way that her hand cupped her left breast. One leg was extended straight, the other knee drawn up almost demurely. If she had been nude, lying against a backdrop of rumpled sheets or autumn leaves, or meadow grass, she would have had the perfect posture for a Playboy centerfold. "It's there even when you read to me now. The sad feeling, I mean. It changes the story, makes it not as good, because I can't pretend I don't hear how sad you are." "I'll come by at eight o'clock for breakfast," Wally suggested. "We have to set a date."

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