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The silence on the line was not merely that of a caller holding her tongue. It was abyssal and perfect, as no silence on a telephone ever can be, without the faintest hiss or crackle of static, no hint of breathing or. With remarkably little splash, the sedan eased into the water. Briefly it floated, bobbling near shore, tipped forward by the weight of the engine. As the lake flooded in through the floor vents, the vehicle settled steadily-then sank rapidly when water reached the two partially open windows..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..Without using his flashlight, depending only on the moon, he ascended through the cemetery to the service road..When Junior cut open a grapefruit for breakfast, he didn't find a quarter in it..The reverend said, "I'm sure you underestimate my parishioners, Celestina. They won't be scandalized. They'll open their hearts."..He had nothing against Negroes. He didn't wish them ill. He wasn't prejudiced. Live and let live. He believed that as long as they stayed with their own kind and abided by the rules of a polite society, like everyone else, they had a right to live in peace..When she tried to speak to him, she could no more easily raise her voice than she could extend a hand to him..His first year in San Francisco was an eventful one for the nation and the world. Winston Churchill, arguably the greatest man of the century thus far, died. The United States launched the first air strikes against North Vietnam, and Lyndon Johnson raised troop levels to 150,000 in that conflict. A Soviet cosmonaut was the first to take a space walk outside an orbiting craft. Race riots raged in Watts for five fiery days. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was signed into law. Sandy Koufax, a Los Angeles Dodger, pitched a perfect game, in which no hitter reached first base. T. S. Eliot died, and Junior purchased one of the poet's works through the Book-of-the-Month Club. Other famous people passed away: Stan Laurel, Nat King Cole, Le Corbusier, Albert Schweitzer, Somerset Maugham.... Indira Gandhi became the first woman prime minister of India, and the Beatles' inexplicable and annoying success rolled on and on..By Thursday, the eruption passed from him. Because he'd had the self-control not to claw his face or hands, he was presentable enough to venture out into the city; although if people in the streets could have seen the weeping scabs and inflamed scratches that tattooed his body and limbs, they would have fled with the grim certainty that the black.Cain turned the pistol on Barty, but when Tom charged, Cain swung toward him once more. The round that he fired would have been a crippler, maybe a killer, except that Angel launched herself off the window seat behind Cain and gave him a hard shove, spoiling his aim. The killer stumbled and then shimmered.. "I do, don't I," Rena agreed, as with one plump hand she spread the pleated skirt of her brightly patterned dress.. "I don't stumble. Not much, anyway." To the girl, Bartholomew said, "Angel, are you okay?".. "Now, I'm doubtless," Vanadium said, his voice returning to the uninflected drone that Junior had come to loathe but that he now preferred to the unsettling voice of quiet passion. "No matter what the situation, no matter how knotty the question, I always know what to do..Barty stood in the rain, surrounded by the rain, pummeled by the rain, with the rain. Saturated grass squished under his sneakers. The droplets, in their millions, didn't bend-slip-twist magically around his form, didn't hiss into steam a millimeter from his skin. Yet he remained as dry as baby Moses floating on the river in a mother-made ark of bulrushes..He stashed two suitcases full of clothes and toiletries-plus the contents of Pinchbeck's safe-deposit box-in the van, and then added those precious items that he'd be loath to lose if the hit on Bartholomew went wrong, forcing him to leave his Russian Hill life and flee arrest. The works of Caesar Zedd. Sklent's three brilliant paintings. The needlepoint pillows, to which he'd colorfully applied the wisdom of Zedd, constituted the bulk of this collection of bare essentials: 102 pillows in numerous shapes and sizes, which he had completed in just thirteen months of feverish stitchery~.This wasn't thrill killing-which, now that he'd had time to think about it, he realized was beneath him, even if in the service of personal growth. This would be murder for good, justifiable cause..As he passed the living-room archway, he said, "Watch out for tidal waves, Uncle Jacob."..Think, think. A three-minute drive to the Lampion place. Maybe two minutes, running stop signs, cutting comers..He intended to mash the sole of Victoria's right shoe in the pat of butter and leave a long smear on the floor, as though she slipped on it and fell toward the ovens..By the time he put his suitcase and three boxes of books--the collected works of Zedd and selections from the Book-of-the-Month Club-in the Suburban, Junior had rushed twice more to the bathroom. His legs were shaky, and he felt hollow, frail, as if he'd lost more than was apparent, as if the essential substance of himself was gone..Celebration of course, would lead to incarceration and perhaps to electrocution. With Vanadium, the maniac cop, likely to be found lurking under the bed or masquerading as a nurse to catch him in an unguarded moment, Junior had to recover at a pace that his physician would not find miraculous. Dr. Parkhurst expected to discharge him no sooner than the following morning..Without commenting, Tom continued: "And worlds just like ours-except that my parents never met, and I was never born. Worlds in which Wally was never shot because he was too unsure of himself or just too stupid to take Celestina to dinner that night or to ask her to marry him."..He hurried the length of the diner, pushing past waitresses, checking out all three of the possibilities, but of course, none of them was the dead detective--or anyone else Junior had ever seen before. He was looking for--what?--a ghost, but vengeful ghosts didn't sit down to a meat-loaf lunch in the middle of a hauntin..Worse than the tenderness in the bones, the bleeding gums, the headaches, the ugly bruises, worse than the anemia-related weariness and the spells of breathlessness, was the suffering that her battle caused to those whom she loved. More frequently as the days passed, they were unable to conceal their worry and their sorrow. She held their hands when they trembled. She asked them to pray with her when they expressed anger that this should happen to her-of all people, to her, and she wouldn't let them go until the anger was gone. More than once, she pulled sweet Angel into her lap, stroked her hair, and soothed her with talk of all the good times shared in better days. And always Barty,

watching over her in his blindness, aware that she would not be dying in all the places where she was, but taking no consolation from the fact that she would continue to exist in other worlds where he could never again be at her side. "You should be with your children," Agnes worried. Maria looked up. "My babies are sitted with my sister." She worried that her anxiety would prove contagious, that when her fear infected her boy, he would be less able to fight whatever hateful thing had taken seed in his right eye. He didn't wonder about his sanity, either, as a less self-improved man might have done. No madman strives to enhance his vocabulary or to deepen his appreciation for culture. Yet his curious attraction to these newborns kept him at the window, and he began to believe that unconsciously he had intended to come here from the moment he guided his walker out of his room. He'd been compelled to come. Drawn by some mysterious magnetism. When together in Agnes's company, Edom and Jacob were brothers, comfortable with each other. But together, just the two, no Agnes, they were more awkward than strangers, because strangers had no shared history to overcome. Junior gave the Raisinets to him, and Google left the theater with his candy and his cash. against his face, thorns gouging his skin, piercing his lips. His father, oblivious of his own puncture wounds, trying to. might be grumpy and would certainly be torpid, bleary-eyed, and uncommunicative. Angel awake was always fully awake, soaking up color texture-mood, marveling in the baroque detail of Creation, and generally lending support to the apperception--test prediction that she might be an art prodigy. "And in some of them, maybe I died the night you were born, and you live alone with your dad." He waited for Otter to nod, but Otter stood motionless. "Could you throw an Oreo someplace you weren't blind or maybe someplace Wally wasn't shot?" He knew what she made of it, all right, and he could see that the others on the porch knew as well, and likewise he could see that all of them wanted to hear him confirm the conclusion at which Agnes had arrived long before he'd come here with Wally this evening. Even in the dining room, before the proof in the rain, Tom had recognized the special bond between the blind boy and this buoyant little girl. In fact, he couldn't have arrived at any conclusion different from the one Agnes reached, because like her, he believed that the events of every day revealed mysterious design if you were willing to see it, that every fife had profound purpose. The subtle distortions in his vision, which caused lines of type to twist, didn't appear to trouble Barty much otherwise. He moved as quickly and as surely as ever, with his special grace. "And how about this," he continued. "Every point in the universe is directly connected to every other point, regardless of distance, so any point on Mars is, in some mysterious way, as close to me as is any of you. Which means it's possible for information-and objects, even people-to move instantly between here and London without wires or microwave transmission. In fact, between here and a distant star, instantly. We just haven't figured out how to make it happen. Indeed, on a deep structural level, every point in the universe is the same point. This interconnectedness is so complete that a great flock of birds taking flight in Tokyo, disturbing the air with their wings, contributes to weather changes in Chicago." Startled, he snatched his hand back. The object fell, ringing faintly against the pavement. She thought of herself as a creative person, a capable and efficient and committed person, but she did not think of herself as a strong person. Yet she would need great strength for what lay ahead. Entering the bedroom, Junior had expected to cast aside his pistol and draw a knife. But he was no longer in a mood for close-up work. Fortunately, he'd managed to hold on to the gun. "She reads too much hard-boiled detective fiction," Nolly said. "And lately, she's talking about writing it." Over potato soup and an asparagus salad, the dinner conversation got off to a promising start: a discussion of favorite potato dishes, observations on the weather, talk of Mexico at Christmas. Dining room. Two place settings at one end of the table. Wineglasses. Two ornate pewter candlesticks, candies not yet lit. On this January twilight, as Maria Elena Gonzalez drove south along the coast from Newport Beach, all men of the sea must have been reaching for bottles of rum to celebrate the fruit-punch sky: ripe cherries in the west, blood oranges overhead, clustered grapes dark purple in the east. You struck a discord that can be heard, however faintly, all the way to the farthest end of the universe. All the way back to the ridge, sitting up front beside a county deputy in a police cruiser, with an ambulance and other patrol cars racing close behind them, Junior had shaken uncontrollably. When he tried to respond to the officer's questions, his uncharacteristically thin voice cracked more often than not, and he was able to croak only, "Jesus, dear Jesus," over and over. "I'm no hero," Paul insisted. "I just got your mom out of there in the process of saving myself." Prudence required that they strategize as though Enoch Cain were Satan himself, as though every fly and beetle and rat provided eyes and ears for the killer, as though ordinary precautions could never foil him. "Yes, I was." She didn't tell him that her fear had not been allayed by his assurances or by his second walk in the rain. While Angel continued her relentless interrogation of Paul Damascus, Tom joined her mother in front of the large window at the end of the room farthest from the dinner table. THE DEAD DETECTIVE, grinning in the moonlight, a pair of silvery quarters gleaming in the sockets once occupied by his eyes. Following little Bartholomew's murder, however, people might remember the man who had been asking after the mother, Celestina. Junior wasn't just any man, either; irresistibly handsome, he left an indelible impression on people, especially on women. Inevitably, the cops would be knocking on his door, sooner or later. She was not yet twenty-one, and he was at least twice her age, but he leaned like a small child against her, and like a mother she comforted him. 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. He got everything he ordered--full value, and more. When he lifted off the top of the bun to squeeze mustard onto the burger, he discovered a shiny quarter pressed into the half-melted cheese. But he was more than she had ever imagined her boy to be, more than merely a prodigy. Heart racing, but reminding himself that strength and wisdom arose from a calm mind, Junior stood in the center of the small kitchen, slowly turning to study every angle of the room. "so she's married," Junior said, figuring that maybe Celestina wasn't his heart mate, after all. Since her conversation with Joshua Nunn the previous Thursday, she'd had more than four

days to armor herself for the worst. She prepared for it as well as any mother could while still holding on to her sanity.. "And even in her dreams, you're determined to be there for her. There was a boogeyman, I have no doubt you would kick his hairy ass, and he wouldn't come around again, ever. So you just go in this gallery..No time for horror, disgust. Every second mattered now, and every minute might cost another life.."Yes. Sodium chloride will work, too. Common salt. Mix enough of it with water, and it's generally effective.".One moment, girl and yellow vinyl ball. The next moment, gone as if they'd never been.. "I haven't disturbed him," said the visitor, taking his cue from the doctor and keeping his voice low..Wally had disposed of his properties in San Francisco under Tom's careful supervision. Any attempt to trace him from the city to Bright Beach would fail. His vehicles were purchased through a corporation, and his new house had been bought through a trust named after his late wife..Certain disbelief insulated her against immediate surprise. She shook her head. "That's not possible.".When Agnes turned her head and saw Maria Elena Gonzalez, she thought she must be dreaming again..No weekend had ever passed so quickly, and no midnight had ever brought with it such dread..Phimie must be honored now with laughter instead of with tears, because her life had left Celestina with so many memories of joy and with joy personified in Angel. To fend off tears, she said, "Listen, Clark Kent, we women need our little secrets, our private thoughts. If you can really read my heart this easily, I guess I'm going to have to start wearing lead brassieres.".Onto its roof now, the Pontiac spun as it slid, grinding loudly against the blacktop, and regardless of how determinedly Agnes held on, she was being pulled out of her seat, toward the inverted ceiling and also backward. Her forehead knocked hard into the thin overhead padding, and her back wrenched against the headrest..find the detective's unlikely theory and persistent questioning to be tedious. "I seriously doubt that a dose of ipecac would produce such a violent response as in this case-not pharyngeal hemorrhage, for God's..For more than two weeks, Agnes's heart had been a clangorous place, filled with the rattle and bang of hard emotions, but now a sort of quiet had come upon it, a peace that, if it held, might one day allow joy again..One detail. One only. It was a crucial detail, however, one that she absolutely must confirm before she left St. Mary's, even if she would be required to look at the child once more, this spawn of violence, this killer of her sister..With Barty's presence, Christmas Eve dinners had become even more agreeable, especially this year when he was almost-three-going-on-twenty. He talked about the visits to friends that he and his mother and Edom had made earlier in the day, about Father Brown, as if that cleric-detective were real, about the puddle-jumping toads that had been singing in the backyard when he and his mother had arrived home from the cemetery, and his chatter was engaging because it was full of a child's charm yet peppered with enough precocious observations to make it of interest to adults..Two more uniformed officers had entered the kitchen, fresh from their search of the apartment. They were amused.. "You must be thinking of someone else," she said, pushing a wad of bills into his hand. "Me, I'm a jellyfish in high heels..".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..He didn't know what he was looking for. He simply felt empowered to be the one conducting the surveillance for a change..The galerieur's icy demeanor thawed marginally at this proof of taste and financial resources. He either smiled or grimaced at a vague but unpleasant smell-hard to tell which-and identified himself as the owner, Maxim Coquin..He closed his eyes again and seemed asleep, but then as she clicked off the lamp, he murmured, "You have your halo again..".Caution discarded, Junior went inside, for the same reason that a dedicated opera aesthete might once a decade attend a country-music concert: to confirm the superiority of his taste and to be amused by what passed for music among the great unwashed. Some might call it slumming..In the kitchen, he fussily avoided the blood and stepped around Victoria to switch off both ovens. He killed the gas flame under the large pot of boiling water on the cook top..He briefly considered playing dumb, but he knew she was too smart for that. "Gunsmoke, you mean. Listen, I know you'll do whatever's necessary to keep Angel safe, because you love her so much. Love will give..After tucking the flashlight under his belt, he grabbed the lip of the Dumpster with both hands. The metal was gritty, cold, and wet..Barty came out of the house with the library copy of Podkayne Of Mary, which his mother had promised to read to him later, in the hospital. "Are we all going?" he asked.. "Tragic. Her string's been cut too soon. Her music's ended prematurely," Junior said, feeling confident enough to dish a serving of the maniac cop's half-baked theory of life back to him. "There's a discord in he universe now, Detective. No one can know how the vibrations of that discord will come to affect you, me, all of us..".The boy's silvery giggles rang as merrily as sleigh bells, his Christmas spirit undampened. "Not between, Mommy. Nobody could do that. I just ran where the rain wasn't..".A cold wetness just above the crook of his left elbow. A sting. A tourniquet of flexible rubber tubing had been tied around his left arm, to make a vein swell more visibly, and the sting had been the prick of a hypodermic needle..Anyway, traumatic as it had been, the shooting was not the worst thing that happened to him that year..The walls were barren. The only art in these rooms was a single sculpture. Junior was taking university extension courses in art appreciation and almost daily haunting the city's countless galleries, constantly deepening and refining his knowledge. He intended to refrain from acquiring a collection until he was as expert on the subject as any director of any museum in the city..Now out of the kitchen, along the hall, and up the stairs, two at a time, into Victoria's bedroom. Not with the intention of snaring a perverse souvenir. Merely to find a blanket..Junior's fear gave way to an appreciation for the irony in this situation. Gradually, he regained the ability to smile, tossed the coin in the air, caught it, and dropped it in his pocket..Here, four days past Christmas, after two days of torment, Agnes knew the worst, that her treasured son must go eyeless or die, must choose between blindness or cancer of the brain..For a while, Junior half convinced himself that the quarter in his cheeseburger, in December '65, was a meaningless coincidence, unrelated to Vanadium. His short tour of the kitchen, in search of the perpetrator, had given him reason to believe the diner's sanitary standards were inadequate. Recalling the greasy men

on that culinary death squad, he knew that he'd been fortunate not to discover a dead rodent spread-eagle on the melted cheese, or an old sock..Oblivious that she and Barty had become the center of attention, Angel said, "Does he ever get the quarters back?".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..He stepped to the front door, which was framed by curtained side lights. He drew one of the curtains aside and peered out..Drawn one after the other, two knaves of spades didn't signify two deadly enemies, but meant that the enemy already predicted by the first would be unusually powerful, exceptionally dangerous..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..Her voice was flat and a little hard. Another man might have mistaken her tone for disapproval, for impatience, even for quiet anger..They were inseparable, her son and this cherished girl, as they had been virtually since the moment they had met, more than six years ago. The special perception that they shared--all the ways things are-accounted for part of their closeness, but only part. The bond between them was so deep that it defied understanding, as mysterious as the concept of the Trinity, three gods in one..A half bath downstairs. Two bedrooms and a full bath on the upper floor. All deserted..The port-wine birthmark appeared to be darker than before and differently mottled than he remembered it.

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