

THE KINGDOM OF GOD STUDIES FROM THE VIEW POINT OF OUR FATHER

On this morning in March, minutes after the pie caravan had departed, Edom got his Ford Country Squire out of the garage and drove to the nursery, which opened early. Spring was drawing near, and much work needed to be done to make the most of the rosarium that Joey Lampion had encouraged him to restore. He happily contemplated hours of browsing through plant stock, tools, and gardening supplies..Almost as an afterthought, as he was leaving, he tucked the brochure for "This Momentous Day" into a jacket pocket. There would be amusement value in hearing a group of cutting-edge young artists analyze Celestina's greeting-card images. Besides, as the Academy of Art College was the premier school of its type on the West Coast, a few of the partygoers might actually know her and be able to give him some valuable background. The party raged in a cavernous loft on the third-and top-floor of a converted industrial building, the communal residence and studio of a group of artists who believed that art, sex, and politics were the three hammers of violent revolution, or something like that..Now that neither of them had a doubt that the other shared the same need and that eventually they would satisfy each other, Victoria was opting for discretion. Wise woman..Leashed like a dog, he walked along, sullen and shivering with sickness and rage. He stared around him, seeing the stone tower, stacks of wood by its wide doorway, rusty wheels and machines by a pit, great heaps of gravel and clay. Turning his sore head made him dizzy..Shortly after six o'clock, Saturday morning, she stirred from a fretful dream and saw Barty sitting up in bed, reading..Fortunately, he'd kept neither cash nor his checkbook in the suitcase. With Zedd intact, his losses were tolerable..Lipscomb women gladly obey the wishes of Lipscomb men-unless they disagree, of course, or don't disagree but are just feeling mulish..In the morning, after their first night together, without either of them suggesting what must be done, Barty and Angel went in silence into the backyard and, together, climbed the oak, to watch the sunrise from its highest bower. Three years later, on Easter Sunday in 1986, the fabled bunny brought them a gift: Angel gave birth to Mary. "It's time for a nice ordinary name in this family," she declared..They were dining by candlelight. Vanilla-scented bougies stood on the sideboard, across the room, glimmering in glass chimneys, but Barty pointed instead to five squat red candles distributed through the centerpiece of pine sprays and white carnations..Shortly past nine o'clock, an hour after Edom and Jacob had gone, Barty came downstairs, book in hand. "The twisties are back..". "I know Edom and Jacob have been a burden," said Vinnie, "you having to be responsible for them-". Startled, Junior sat up straight, clutching the silencer-fitted pistol, but the cruiser didn't abruptly brake and pull to the curb in front of the Mercedes, as he expected.. "Whatever you're paying here, that's what you'll pay for the new place," Lipscomb said..A quick review of these book spines revealed that the treasured Zedd collection wasn't here..Instead, he focused on the hand in the flashlight beam: four long, thin, chalk-white digits bent to the heel; thumb thrust up stiffly, as though Neddy hoped to hitchhike out of the Dumpster, out of death, and back to his piano in the cocktail lounge on Nob Hill..He lay still, waiting for silence to return, so he could hear whether the great gong had drawn people into the alley..The window gave way an instant before Celestina squeezed off the shot. The man dropped out of sight. She didn't know if she had scored a hit..She. Heretofore, Celestina hadn't given a thought to the gender of the baby, because, to her, it had been less a person than a thing..Either this chatterbox was at all times a babbling airhead or Junior particularly disconcerted him..OF THE SEVEN NEWBORNS, none was fussing, too fresh to the world to realize how much was here to fear..Music played within. An up-tempo number. Possibly swing. He couldn't quite identify the tune..Agnes's big brother by six years, Edom had lived in one of the two apartments above the large detached garage, behind the main house, since he was twenty-five, when he'd left the working world. He was now thirty-six..He had recently learned about the demigods of classic mythology in one of the selections from the Book-of-the-Month Club..Sad symbols of a romance not meant to be, the red rose and the bottle of wine lay on the floor of the foyer. With the corpse gone, no signs of violence remained.. "Good heavens, Vinnie, I know that," she assured him as she lifted Barty-hardly bigger than a bag of sugar-from the bassinet. She settled with the baby into a rocking chair..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..Junior was not immune to traditional logic, but in this case he recognized the superior wisdom of Zedd's philosophy. His dread of Bartholomew and his gut-level animosity toward a child he'd never met defied all reason and exceeded simple paranoia; therefore, it must be purest, infallible animal instinct..After following the blacktop fifty feet, Junior headed downhill through the close-cropped grass, between the tombstones. He switched on his flashlight and trod cautiously, for the ground sloped unevenly and, in places, remained soggy and slippery from the rain..Celestina succumbed to a fit of giggles. Before she could control them, she used up two Kleenex to blow her nose and to blot the laughter from her eyes..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.Alone again with Wally, Celestina said, "They told me that once you regained consciousness, I can only visit ten minutes at a time, and not that often, either..". This unflinching consistency of packaging enables card mechanics, professional gamblers, sleight-of-hand magicians-to manipulate a new deck with confidence that they know, starting, where every card can be found in the stack. An expert mechanic with practiced and dexterous hands can appear to shuffle so thoroughly that even the most suspicious observer will be satisfied-yet he will still know exactly where every card is located in the deck. With masterly manipulation, he can place the cards in the order that he wishes, to achieve whatever effect he desires..He placed

a phone call to Kaitlin Hackachak, his trollish and avaricious sister-in-law, asking her to dispose of Naomi's things, their furniture, and whatever of his own possessions he chose to leave behind. Although she had been awarded a quarter of a million dollars in the family settlement with the state and county, Kaitlin would be at the house by dawn's first light if she thought she might make ten bucks from liquidating its contents..guarantee against self-incrimination, a slap in the face of justice, a violation of the rights of man..Another machine beside the first, stocked with copies of a sexually explicit publication for gays, fired a quarter that hit Junior's forehead. The next snapped against the bridge of his nose.."Getting her into her shoes and coat sooner than Monday required a bribe," Wally said.."-and the under girding of the observation platform itself is unstable. The whole thing could have fallen down with us on it!".She worried that they would argue with her, and though she knew that she was committed to her decision, she was afraid to have that commitment tested just yet..Her hands were slender, long-fingered, graceful. The hands of an artist. They were not powerful hands..Recuperating, he had plenty of time to practice meditation. He became so proficient at focusing on the imaginary bowling pin that he could make himself oblivious of all else. A stridently ringing phone wouldn't penetrate his trance. Even Bob Chicane, Junior's instructor, who knew all the tricks, could not make his voice heard when Junior was at one with the pin.."I'll teach her," Wally said, moving past them to the apartment door, fishing a ring of keys out of his coat pocket..His dry tongue, his parched mouth, his desiccated throat felt packed fall of sand, and his voice lay buried alive down there..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."..If either of them suspected that she was lying, it was Edom. He looked puzzled, but he didn't pursue the issue.."She's got preeclampsia. It's a condition that occurs in about five percent of pregnancies, virtually always after the twenty-fourth week, and usually it can be treated successfully. But I'm not going to sugarcoat this, Celestina. In her case, it's more serious. She hasn't been seeing a doctor, no prenatal care, and here she is in the middle of her thirtyeighth week, about ten days from delivery."..That evening, he was filled with a greater sense of adventure than he'd felt since arriving in the city from Oregon. Consequently, he treated himself to three glasses of a superb Bordeaux and a filet mignon in the same elegant hotel lounge where he had dined on his first night in San Francisco, almost three years earlier..Toward the front of the house, along a hallway suddenly as dark as a tunnel, toward a vague light in the seething gloom. And here a window at the end of the hall.."I've already told them," Joey said, wheeling away from her and yanking open the door of the foyer closet with such force that she thought he would tear it off its hinges..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..with an encircling and suggestive lick, and then licked his lips, too, when the cold steel slipped free of them..there in more genteel and gilded ages, and her flights of imagination sometimes acquired such vivid detail that they were eerily like memories..Reflections of those tracks appeared as stigmatic tears on the long face of the physician..He was no longer in his scrubs, but wore gray wool slacks and a blue cashmere sweater over a white shirt. Face somber, he looked less like an obstetrician engaged in the business of life than like a professor of philosophy forever pondering the inevitability of death..The popeyed little toad smirked over there on the far side of his pretentious desk..The driver shook his head. "I knew everything anyone would need to know about you when I heard you ask your kid what would happen if the stupid boogeyman showed up in her dream."..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..By the time they reached the seventh painting, alcohol and rich French cuisine and Jack Lientery's powerful art combined to devastate Frieda. She shuddered, leaned with one hand on a canvas, hung her head, and committed an act of bad PR..In time, his hand tightened feebly on hers. And a while after that hopeful sign, his eyelids fluttered, opened..Startled, the pianist turned to face him-and backed off a step, as though his personal space had been too deeply invaded. "Oh, well, thank you, that's kind. I love my work, you know, it's so much fun it hardly qualifies as work at all. I've been playing the piano since I was six, and I was never one of those children who whined about having to take lessons. I simply couldn't get enough."..When he woke, he was in a hospital bed, his upper body slightly elevated. The only illumination was provided by a single window: an ashen light too dreary to be called a glow, trimmed into drab ribbons by the..AS MEANINGFUL AS Jacob's death had been within the small world of his family, Agnes Lampion never lost sight of the fact that there were more resonant deaths in the larger world before 1968 ended and the Year of the Rooster followed. On the fourth of April, James Earl Ray gunned down Martin Luther King on a motel balcony in Memphis, but the assassin's hopes were foiled when, because of this murder, freedom grew more vigorously from the richness of a in martyr's blood. On June 1, Helen Keller died peacefully at eighty-seven. Blind and deaf since early childhood, mute until her adolescence, Miss Keller led a life of astonishing accomplishment; she learned to speak, to ride horses, to waltz; she graduated cum laude from Radcliffe, an inspiration to millions and a testament to the potential in even the most blighted life. On June 5, Senator Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated in the kitchen of the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. Unknown numbers died when Soviet tanks invaded Czechoslovakia, and hundreds of thousands perished in the final days of the Cultural Revolution in China, many eaten in acts of cannibalism sanctioned by Chairman Mao as acceptable political action. John Steinbeck, novelist, and Tallulah Bankhead, actress, came to the end of their journeys in this world, if not yet in all others. But James Lovell, William Anders, and Frank Borman-the first men to orbit the moon-traveled 250,000 miles into space, and all returned alive.."I didn't know her well. She didn't hang out or party much--especially after the baby."..Never before had she put faith in any form of prognostication. In the whispery falling of those twelve cards, however, she heard the faint

voice of truth, not quite a coherent truth, not as clear a message as she might have wished, but a murmur that she couldn't ignore..In the brief silence between cuts on the album, he heard the clink of the wineglass against the bottle of Merlot, as the visitor evidently gathered them from the floor..Kid's room. Bartholomew's room. Furniture in cheerful primary colors. Pooh posters on the wall..In spite of his dumpy appearance-and especially in the dark, where appearances didn't count-Vanadium had the aura of a mystic. Although Junior didn't believe in mystics or in the various unearthly powers they claimed to possess, he knew that mystics who believed in themselves were exceptionally dangerous people..mother's understanding of the world and of her own existence. Unlike most other toddlers, Barty was entirely comfortable with change. From bottle to drinking glass, from crib to open bed, from favorite foods to untried flavors, he delighted in the new. Although Agnes usually remained near at hand, Barty was as pleased to be put temporarily in the care of Maria Gonzalez as in the care of Edom, and he smiled as brightly for his dour uncle Jacob as for anyone..Extracting documents from his valise, Vinnie said, "Well, I've no right to talk. Food is my obsession. Look at me, so fat you'd think I'd been raised from birth for sacrifice."..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..Angel interrupted, bursting into the room, gasping for breath. "Come quick! It's incredible. It's wonderful. You've got to see this. And I mean, Barty, you have to see this."..Lientery's work met the criteria of great art, about which Junior had learned in art-appreciation courses. It undermined his sense of reality, left him wary, filled him with angst and with loathing for the human condition, and made him wish he hadn't just eaten dinner..He reached the end of the alleyway, stumbled into the stream of pedestrians, nearly knocked over an elderly Chinese man, turned, and discovered ... no Vanadium..We know a dozen different Arthurs now, all of them true. The Shire changed irrevocably even in Bilbos lifetime. Don Quixote went riding out to Argentina and met Jorge Luis Borges there. Plus c'est la meme chose, plus fa change..As Junior was about to knock again, the door flew inward, and over Sinatra having fun with "When My Sugar Walks Down the Street," Victoria said, "You're early, I didn't hear your car--" She was speaking as she pulled the door open, and she cut herself off in midsentence When she stepped up to the threshold and saw who stood before her..He'd never had a chance to read this to Perri or to benefit from her opinion. Now, as he scanned the lines of his calligraphic handwriting, his words seemed foolish, inappropriate, confused..At last, as the sun slowly set, he arrived at the highest of the high redoubts, beyond which the branches were too young and too weak to support him farther. Against a sky red enough to delight the most sullen sailors, he rose and stood in a final crook of limbs, pressing his left hand against a balancing branch, right hand planted cockily on his hip, lord of his domain, having kicked off the trammels of darkness and fashioned from them a ladder.."Great guy. Do you have an address for her, a way maybe I could get in touch about her brother?"..Her awful sense of weightlessness became something much better: buoyancy, an exhilarating lightness of spirit. Fear remained with her-fear for Barty, fear of the future and of the strange complexity of Creation that she'd just glimpsed-but wonder and wild hope now tempered it..find reason to celebrate every development in life, including the cruelest catastrophe, by discovering the bright side to even the darkest hour..Those words, in a vertiginous spiral, spooled through the memory tapes in Junior's mind, as clear and powerfully affecting-and every bit as alarming-as the memory flash of the ordeal in the Dumpster. He couldn't recall where he'd heard them, who had spoken them, but revelation trembled tantalizingly along the rim of his mind.."That's the Oreo. After I ate it up, the cookie went smooosh--smooosh into my finger."..One manly woman. Several womanly men. But no blocky figure that could have been the crazed cop even in disguise..Delighted to be dating someone who lived neck-deep in culture especially after two months with Tammy Bean, the money maiden. Junior was surprised that he didn't score with Frieda on the first date. He was usually irresistible even to women who weren't sluts..She nodded. And could not lift her gaze from her hands. Could not meet his eyes, afraid that his worry would feed her own, afraid also that the sight of his sympathy would shake loose her perilous grip on her emotions..Rudy's blue suit, as usual, pinched and shorted his shambling frame. Here in a boneyard, he appeared to be not just a man with a bad tailor, but a grave robber who looted the dead for his wardrobe.."I doubted myself more than God, though Him, too. I had those boys' blood on my hands. They were mine to protect, and I failed."..Agnes, who inherited the property, would have welcomed her brothers in the main house. Although both were willing to visit her for an occasional dinner or to sit in rocking chairs on the porch, on a summer night, neither could abide living in that ominous place..During the following day, January 6, as Phimie was wheeled around the hospital for tests in various departments, Celestina remained in 724, working on her portfolio for a class in advanced portraiture. She was a Junior at the Academy of Art College..And now she didn't need him anymore. He gazed at her face, held her cooling hand; his anchor was slipping away from him, leaving him adrift..He was in a mood to shoot her, but this weapon was not fitted with a sound-suppressor. He'd left that gun in Celestina's bedroom. This was the pistol that he had taken from Frieda Bliss's collection, and it was as full of sound as Frieda had been full of spew..He turned over the two most recent discards. Neither was a jack of spades, and both were what he expected them to be..Her fear, Agnes suddenly realized, arose from her father's often expressed conviction that an attempt to excel at anything was a sin that would one day be grievously punished. All forms of amusement were sinful, by his way of thinking, and all those who sought even the simplest entertainment were lost souls; however, those who desired to amuse others were the worse sinners, because they were overflowing with pride, striving to shine, eager to make themselves into false gods, to be praised and adored as only God should be adored. Actors, musicians, singers, novelists were doomed to hell by the very acts of creation which, in their egomania, they saw as the equal of their Creator's work. Striving to excel at anything, in fact, was a sign of corruption in the soul, whether one wanted to be recognized as a superior carpenter or car mechanic, or a grower of prize roses. Talent, in

her father's view, was not a gift from God, but from the devil, meant to distract us from prayer, penitence, and duty..Twenty minutes later, at home, he poured sherry over ice. Sipping, he stood in the living room, admiring his two paintings..From time to time, he halted, leaning against the walker as if in need of rest. He took care occasionally to grimace-convincingly, not too theatrically---and to breathe harder than necessary..Sometimes, while shaving or combing his hair, as he was looking in the bathroom or foyer mirror, Junior thought that he glimpsed a presence, dark and vaporous, less substantial than smoke, standing or moving behind him. At other times, this entity seemed to be within the mirror. He couldn't focus on it, study it, because the moment he became aware of the presence, it was gone..Junior could almost feel sorry for this sad, stocky, haunted detective, deranged by years of difficult public service..Shaking the ravaged khakis at him, she said, "Then what made such a mess of these?."No, no. But being around him so much, inevitably I absorb some details. He's a compelling speaker when the subject interests him."..Junior's agony might have made him howl like a cankered dog or might even have dropped him to his knees if he hadn't used the pain to fuel his anger. His knobby countenance was so sensitive that the light breeze flailed his skin as cruelly as if it had been a barbed lash. Empowered by rage even more beautiful than his countenance was monstrous, he crossed the parking lot, looking through car windows in the hope of seeing keys dangling from an ignition.."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?."Celestina was maneuvered aside as the surgical team began resuscitation procedures. Stunned, she backed away from the table until she encountered a wall. In southern California, as dawn of this new momentous day looms.The candlestick was gone. The pedestal on which it had stood now held a Griskin bronze so devastatingly brilliant that one quick look at it would give nightmares to nuns and assassins alike..Behind them, two shots roared, and Paul knew that the reverend was no longer of this world..Angel pointed to a Mercedes parked about forty feet behind the Buick, just as its headlights went off..Worried that tears would frighten Barty, that indulging in a few would result in a ruinous flood, Agnes held back the salt tides. A mother's duty proved to be the stuff from which dams were built..He hadn't learned much from the call other than that they hadn't found Vanadium in his Studebaker at the bottom of Quarry Lake..The baby felt too light to be real. She weighed five pounds fourteen ounces, but she seemed lighter than air, as though she might float up and out of her aunt's arms..About ten feet from the trunk of the oak, Barty departed his straight route and began to circle the tree..Wishing he had left the gauze wrappings on his face, but afraid that the airwaves might already be carrying news of the bandaged man who had killed a minister in Spruce Hills, Junior abandoned the Dodge and hurriedly walked back to the private-service terminal, where the pilot from Sacramento waited. At the sight of his passenger, the pilot blanched and said, Allergic reaction to WHAT? And Junior said, Camellias, because Sacramento was the Camellia Capital of the World, and all that he wanted was to get back there, where he'd left his new Ford van and his Sklents and his Zedd collection and everything he needed to live in the future. The pilot couldn't conceal his intense revulsion, and Junior knew that he would have been stranded if he hadn't paid the round-trip charter fare in advance..Sitting on the edge of the bed, taking his hand, she stared at his sweet little bow of a mouth, whereas before she would have met his eyes. "Tell me."..Junior locked the door. He started the engine and drove out of the cemetery faster than was prudent on the winding service road..Among themselves, the authorities spoke more often than not in murmurs. Or perhaps Junior was too distracted to hear them clearly.."And you're saying fear can fill his emptiness as well as sex or booze?" Kathleen wondered..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..Jacob had become a card mechanic for one purpose. Not because he'd ever be a gambler. Not to wow friends with card tricks. Not because the challenge intrigued him. He wanted to be able to give Agnes winning cards once in a while, if she was losing too frequently or needed to have her spirits lifted. He didn't feed her winning hands often enough to make her suspicious or to make the games less fun for Edom or Joey. He was judicious. The effort he expended-the thousands of hours of practice-was repaid with interest each time Agnes laughed with delight after being dealt a perfect hand..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..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..His right side, however, had come to rest against an object harder than bagged paper, an angular mass. As the skull-rattling gong faded, allowing more clarity of thought, he realized that an unpleasant, vaguely warm, damp something was pressed against his right cheek..Knuckle over knuckle, snared in the web of thumb and forefinger, vanishing into the purse of the palm, secretly traversing the hand, reappearing, knuckle over knuckle, the coin glimmered as it turned..Now that efforts were being made to control the preeclampsia, Dr. Daines had scheduled a series of tests for the following day. He expected to recommend a cesarean section as soon as Phimie's e's blood pressure was reduced and stabilized, but he didn't want to risk this surgery before determining what complications might have resulted from her restricted diet and the compression of her abdomen..The prickly-bur ghosts of two little children didn't concern him. At worst, they were spiritual gnats.."I mean," said Dr. Lipscomb, "that I'm selling my practice and putting an end to my medical career. I wanted you to know."..I said it didn't work that way, and it doesn't. Yet ... I don't actually walk in those other worlds to avoid the rain, but I sort of walk in the idea of those worlds. . . ."..As Edom crossed the threshold, moving outside to the landing at the top of the stairs, Jacob followed, proselytizing for

his faith: "Christmas Eve, 1940, St. Anselmo's Orphanage, San Francisco. Josef Krepp killed eleven boys, ages six through eleven, murdering them in their sleep and cutting a different trophy from each-an eye here, a tongue there." To Nolly, Kathleen said, "This is why I married you. To be around talk like this." Embarrassed, cold, abruptly frightened, she returned to the Old West, where night on the low desert was warm. The campfire flickered welcomingly. John Wayne put an arm around her and said, "There are no dead husbands or dead babies here," and though he intended only to reassure her, she was overcome by misery until Shirley MacLaine took her aside for some heart-to-heart girl talk. Agnes woke again and was no longer chilled, but feverish. Her lips were cracked, her tongue rough and dry. Frowning, Panglo, said, "Terrible, you're right, so many terrible things happen, but I don't see why trains-". Grace and Celestina fell at once into the rhythms of kitchen work, not only brewing the coffee, but also helping Agnes with the pies. The girl sucked in deep lungfuls of the weary clouds. "Better hold tight, Mommy, I'm gonna float." On the other hand, one needed to believe in something. Junior didn't clutter his mind with superstitious nonsense or allow himself to be constrained by the views of bourgeois society or by its smug concepts of right and wrong, good and evil. From Zedd, he'd learned that he was the sole master of his universe. Self-realization through self-esteem was his doctrine; total freedom and guiltless pleasure were the rewards of faithful adherence to his principles. What he believed in-the only thing he believed in-was Junior Cain, and in this he was a fiercely passionate believer, devout unto himself. Consequently, as Caesar Zedd explained, when any man was clearheaded enough to cast off all the false. On he went, up he went, trunk to limb, limb to branch, branch to limb, to limb, to trunk. Hand over hand up the vertical parts, gripping with his knees, then standing and walking like a tightrope artist along limbs horizontal to the ground, swinging over empty air and stepping from one woody walkway to another, ever upward toward the highest bower, dwindling as though he were growing younger during the ascent, becoming a smaller and smaller boy. Forty feet, fifty feet, already far higher than the house, striving toward the green citadel at the summit. His waitress was a cutie. She flirted with him, and he knew he could have her if he wanted. Inking? The sequined and tasseled hat of fame was too gaudy for her; she was a minister's daughter, from Spruce Hills, Oregon, more comfortable in a baseball cap. He stood at a window, staring down into the street, his profile to her, and in his silence he searched for the words to describe the "something extraordinary" that he had mentioned earlier. "Better. Fear doesn't require him even to seduce a woman or to buy a bottle of whiskey. He just needs to open himself to it, and he will be filled like a glass under a faucet. As difficult as this may be to comprehend, Cain would choose to be neck-deep in a bottomless pool of terror, desperately trying to stay afloat, rather than to suffer that unrelieved hollowness. Fear can give shape and meaning to his life, and I intend not merely to fill him with fear but to drown him in it." With the dead woman's guest on the way, minutes were precious. Attention to detail was essential, however, regardless of how much time was required to properly stage the little tableau that might disguise murder as a domestic accident. Although he related well to the theme of moral relativism and personal autonomy in a value-neutral world, Junior grew apprehensive about each impending scene of violence, and closed his eyes against the prospect of blood. He resented having to endure ninety minutes of the film before Google finally settled into the seat beside him. She found the switch and clicked off the lamp again. "Good-night, young prince." Lucky took him down into the mines to show him the gangues, the kinds of earth the ore was likely to occur in. A few miners were working at the end of a long level. Dessert was on the house. The waiter brought the four best items on the menu, to spare them the need to make two small decisions after having made such a big one. Barty turned away from her, surveyed the kitchen, and said, "Ah. The twisty is me." Glasses off the table. He seized one of the pewter candlesticks, as well, knocking the candle out of it. A knife already lay on the counter nearby. He used it to slice four pats of butter, yellow and creamy, each half an inch thick, off the end of the stick. Recently, Wally administered to Angel a set of apperception tests for three-year-olds, and the results indicated that she might not ever be a math whiz or a verbal gymnast, but that she might be highly talented in other ways. Her appreciation of color, her innate understanding of the derivation of secondary hues from the primary colors, her sense of spatial relationships, and her recognition of basic geometric forms regardless of the angle at which they were presented were all far beyond what was exhibited by other kids her age. Wally said she was visually, rather than verbally, gifted, that she would undoubtedly exhibit increasing precociousness in matters artistic, that she might follow Celestina's career path, and that she might even prove to be a prodigy. 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. Now he shuffled the first of the four decks precisely as he had shuffled the first deck on Friday evening, and he set it aside. In Cain's bedroom, Tom Vanadium's hooded flashlight revealed a six-foot-high bookcase that held approximately a hundred volumes. The top shelf was empty, as was most of the second. KATHLEEN IN THE candlelight, her ginger eyes a glimmer with images of the amber flame. Icy martinis, extra olives in a shallow white dish. Beyond the tableside window, the legendary bay glimmered, too, darker and colder than Kathleen's eyes, and not a fraction as deep. The ship of night floated over the city and cast down nets of darkness, gathering millions of lights like luminous fishes in its black toils.

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