

WHATS MINE

Earlier in the week, Junior had looked up Thomas Vanadium in the telephone directory. He expected the number to be unlisted, but it was published. What he wanted more than a number was an address, and he found that as well..When Agnes and Paul returned from a honeymoon in Carmel, they discovered that Edom had finally cleared out Jacob's apartment. He donated his twin's extensive files and books to a university library that was building a collection to satisfy a growing professorial and student interest in apocalyptic studies and paranoid philosophy..A deep-set casement window. Two latches on the right side, one high, one low. Detachable hand crank lying on the foot-deep sill. Mechanism socket in the base casing..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.. "I've seen them," Tom assured her. "My dear, you've never smelled anything better than a field full of bacon vines."..Her brothers' solemnity irritated Agnes. They appeared to be taking this reading seriously, as though it were far more than just a little after-dinner entertainment..Commodified fantasy takes no risks: it invents nothing, but imitates and trivializes. It proceeds by depriving the old stories of their intellectual and ethical complexity, turning their action to violence, their actors to dolls, and their truth-telling to sentimental platitude. Heroes brandish their swords, lasers, wands, as mechanically as combine harvesters, reaping profits. Profoundly disturbing moral choices are sanitized, made cute, made safe. The passionately conceived ideas of the great story-tellers are copied, stereotyped, reduced to toys, molded in bright-colored plastic, advertised, sold, broken, junked, replaceable, interchangeable..With his bent thumb against the crook of his forefinger, he flipped the quarter. Even as the coin snapped off the thumbnail and began to stir the air, Tom flung up both hands, fingers spread to show them empty and to distract. Yet on a second look, the coin was not airborne as it had seemed to be, no longer spinning-wink, wink-before their dazzled eyes. It had vanished as though into the payment slot of an ethereal vending machine that dispensed mystery in return..force open Edom's mouth. "Eat your sin, boy, eat your sin!" Edom resists eating his sin, but he's afraid for his eyes.. "What's below us?" Hound pointed to the floor, paved with rough slate flags..Through miles of worry, natural beauty, imagined omens, and the iron-red sands of Mars, they drove at last to Franklin Chan's offices in Newport Beach.. "I'll never forget it," Dr. Salk promised. With his attention still on Perri's pictures, he said, "But I'm afraid you give me far too much credit. I'm no superman. I didn't do the work alone. So many dedicated people were involved."..Testing Celestina's nerves as fully as Barty had tested his mother's, Angel pulled-levered -shinned-swung herself so fast up through the tree, arriving at the boy's side while red streaks still enlivened a sky that was repainting itself purple. She stood in the crook of limbs with him, and her delighted laughter rang down through the cathedral oak. 1975 through 1978: Hare ran from Dragon, Snake fled from Horse, and '78 bounced to the beat, because disco ruled. The reborn Bee Gees dominated the airwaves. John Travolta had the look. Rhodesian rebels, grasping the dangers inherent in any battle between equals, had the manful courage to slaughter unarmed women missionaries and schoolgirls. Spinks won the title from Ali, and Ali won it back from Spinks..Cold, wind-driven rain slashed through the missing windows, and voices rose in the street as people ran toward the Pontiac-thunder in the distance-and on the air was the ozone scent of the storm and the more subtle and more terrible odor of blood, but none of these hard details could make the moment seem real to Agnes, who, in her deepest nightmares, had never felt more like a dreamer than she felt now..He hadn't intended to enter the gallery. No one in his usual circles would attend this show, unless in such a state of chemically altered consciousness that they wouldn't be able to recall the event in the morning, so he wasn't likely to be recognized or remembered. Yet it seemed unwise to risk being identified as a reception attendee if Celestina White's little Bartholomew and maybe the artist herself were murdered later. The police, in their customary paranoia, might suspect a link between this affair and the killings, which would motivate them to seek out and..Outside, he discovered that some worthless criminal wretch had broken into his Suburban during the night. The suitcase and Book-of-the-Month selections were gone. The creep even swiped the Kleenex, the chewing gum, and the breath mints from the glove compartment.. "Your father denies the rape ever occurred, apparently out of what I'd call a misguided willingness to trust in divine justice."..Consequently, he scheduled more time every day with the phone books. He had obtained directories for all nine counties that, with the city itself, comprised the Bay Area.. "Yeah," he confirmed, applying a blue crayon to a grinning bunny that was dancing with a squirrel..The hateful window. The hateful, frozen window. Celestina wrenched on the crank with all of her strength, and felt something give a little, wrenched, but then the crank popped out of the socket and rapped against the sill..This was a relaxation technique that had worked often before. He had teamed it from a brilliant book, How to Have a Healthier Life through Autohypnosis..When she closed the front door and turned away from it, Agnes bumped her swollen belly into Joey. His eyebrows shot up, and he put his hands on her distended abdomen, as if she were more fragile than a robin's egg and more valuable than one by Faberge..He went directly to the kitchen and drew a glass of water at the sink faucet. He swallowed two antiemetic tablets that he had brought with him, to guard against vomiting..He had noted all seven names on the bassinets, but he read them again. He sensed in their names-or in one of their names-the explanation for his seemingly mad perception of a looming threat..Junior joined the throngs, although he had no gift list or feeling for the season. He just needed to get out of his apartment, because he was convinced that the phantom singer would soon serenade him again..If their relationship had not been limited to a single evening of passion, if they had not been of two worlds, if she had not been underage and therefore jailbait, they might have had an open romance, and then her death would have touched him more deeply..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. Edom carried the honey-raisin pear pie, and Agnes toted Barty across the neatly cropped yard, to the front door. The bell push triggered chimes that played the first ten notes of "That Old Black Magic," which they heard distinctly through the glass in the door. Matching her fierce attention with a sudden intensity of his own, Joey said, "Bartholomew." To the window. The warm room sucked cooling fog out of the night, and she leaned across the sill into the streaming mist. Again, he cast his line of memory into murky waters nearly four years in the past, to the night of passion that he had shared with Seraphim in the parsonage. As before, he could recall nothing she'd said, only the exquisite look of her, the nubile perfection of her body. He fiddled with the cylinder until it swung open. Five chambers, a gleaming cartridge in each. Perhaps hoping to discover which runaway freight train or exploding factory would smear him across the landscape, Jacob pushed aside his dessert plate and shuffled each deck separately, then shuffled them together until they were well mixed. He stacked them in front of Maria. "Why do they let a man like that keep his badge?" Junior asked. "He's outrageous, wholly unprofessional." Another of Junior's self-improvement projects, since moving to California, was to become a knowledgeable gourmet, also a connoisseur of fine wines. San Francisco was the perfect university for this education, because it offered innumerable world-class restaurants in every imaginable ethnic variety. Jacob feared what men could do with clubs, knives, guns, bombs, with their bare hands, but he was most preoccupied by the unintended death that humanity brought upon itself with its devices, machines, and structures meant to improve the quality of life. Beside her, the passenger's door barked and shrieked as though alive as though suffering, and these sounds were uncannily like the cries of torment that only Agnes could hear in the haunted chambers of her heart. 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. When he got no response, he wedged the toe of his right loafer under the guy's chest and, with some effort, rolled him onto his back. She felt that she had failed her sister. She didn't know what more she could have done, but if she'd been wiser and more insightful and more attentive, surely this terrible loss would not have come to pass. "Sure they do," Barty said. "But I think Maria embroidered the birds just because they were pretty." He had the capacity to be exceptional at anything to which he applied himself. Bob Chicane had been right about that: Junior was far more intense than other men, possessed of greater gifts and the energy to use them. Pulling herself up in the bed, peering at him suspiciously, she said, "You've gone and memorized old Emily." "Love you," Wally said, and Celestina repeated it, and he said, "I'm gonna stand in the hall till I hear you set both locks." Still relishing her little pretense of rejection, Victoria did not touch the rose. "What kind of woman do you think I am?" Worse, the vengeful and vicious bitch-or bastard, whatever-evidently had made up vile stories about him, which on a slow evening she'd shared with Neddy, with the bartender, with anyone who would listen. The staff of the lounge believed Junior was a dangerous sadist, No doubt she had concocted other lurid stories, as well, charging him with everything from a degenerate interest in bodily wastes to the selfmutilation of his genitalia. "I get frustrated," he admitted. "Trying to learn how to do things in the dark ... I get peed off, as they say." "Get this through your head, you shit-for-brains. I lost a daughter, a precious daughter, my Naomi, the light of my life." At a point where deep water met the shoreline, Junior drove off the road and onto the strand. He parked twenty feet from the water, facing the lake, and switched off the headlights and the engine. When Agnes had asked him to deliver the pies, before she had set out with Joey for the hospital the previous day, Edom had wanted to beg off, but he had agreed without hesitation. He was prepared to suffer every viciousness that nature could throw at him in this life, but he could not endure seeing disappointment in his sister's eyes. Before he taught himself to read books, he also taught himself numbers, and then how to read a clock. The significance of time had a more profound impact on him than Agnes could understand, perhaps because acquiring an awareness of the infinite nature of the universe and the finite nature of each human life-and fully understanding the implications of this knowledge-takes most of us till early adulthood if not later, whereas for Barty, the vast glories of the universe and the comparatively humble nature of human existence were recognized, contemplated, and absorbed in a matter of weeks. In the kitchen, he sat her in a chair and let her slump forward over the breakfast table. With her arms folded, with her head on her arms and turned to one side, she appeared to be resting. Tongue clamped between his teeth as he concentrated on keeping the blue crayon within the lines of the bunny, Barty nodded. "Yeah.. So Barty and Tom just happened to be chatting about a quantum physicist they had seen on a television program, a documentary about the uncanny resonance between the belief in a created universe and some recent discoveries in quantum mechanics and molecular biology. The physicist claimed that a handful of his colleagues, though by no means the majority, believed that with a deepening understanding of the quantum level of reality, there would in time be a surprising rapprochement between science and faith. Then the old man taught it to him. But it wasn't much use, Otter thought, since he had to hide it. The odds against this phenomenal eleven-card draw must be millions to one, which seemed to give the predictions validity. Eventually, he settled on a mental image of a bowling pin as his "seed." This was a smooth, elegantly shaped object that invited languorous contemplation, but it did not tease his libido. Junior had walked along the big show windows, studying the two White paintings displayed to passersby, appalled by their beauty, when suddenly the door had opened and a gallery employee had invited him to come in. No printed invitation needed, no cool test to pass, no bouncers keeping the gate. Such easy accessibility served as proof, if you needed it, that this was not real art. The Worry Bear carries worries in his pockets. Under his Panama hat and in two gold lockets. Carries worries on his back and under his arms. Nevertheless, dear old Worry Bear has his charms. No matter. He was a future-focused, focused man. The past is for losers. No, wait, humility is for losers. "The past is the teat that feeds those too weak to face the future." Yes, that was the line from Zedd that Junior had stitched on a needlepoint pillow. She didn't have an appetite, anyway. Joey was too

much on her mind. The safe birth of a healthy child was a blessing, but it wasn't compensation for her loss. Although by nature resistant to depression, she now had a darkness in her heart that would not relent before a thousand dawns or ten thousand. If a mere nurse had insisted that she eat, Agnes would not have been persuaded, but she couldn't hold out against the insistent importuning of one special seamstress..Scamp was a multitalented woman, with smoother skin than a depilated peach, with more delicious roundnesses than Junior could catalog, but she proved not to be the remedy for his tension. Only Bartholomew, found and destroyed, could give him peace..Saturday morning, Paul made himself useful by assisting Grace with food preparation and by setting out the plates, flatware, and glasses on the dining-room sideboard..hooves. This was no demon child. Its father's evil was'nt visibly reflected in its small.The boy's difference was defined as much by what he didn't do as by what he did. For one thing, he didn't observe the Terrible Twos, the period of toddler rebellion that usually frayed the nerves of the most patient parents. No tantrums for the Pie Lady's son, no bossiness, no crankiness..A sofa and one armchair provided the seating in the living room. No coffee table. A small table beside the chair. A wall unit held a fine stereo system and a few hundred record albums..The bullet had been fired by a renegade cop who was every bit as lousy a marksman as he was a corrupt scumball. He'd been aiming for Nolly's crotch..When he judged that he was near the porch steps, he probed with his cane. Two paces later, the tip rapped the lowest step..She had expected horror, although perhaps not a horror quite as stark as this, and she had also expected to be crushed by it, destroyed, because although she was able to survive any misery that might be visited upon her, she didn't think that she possessed the fortitude to endure the suffering of her innocent child. Yet she listened, and she received the terrible burden of the news, and her bones did not at once turn to dust, though unfeeling dust was what she now preferred to be..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.. "I can't sleep half the time," Deed said, twisting the baseball cap in his hands. "I've lost weight, and I'm so nervous, jumpy." This was better than taking slow deep breaths. Periodically, on the way to Vanadium's house, Junior spat out a string of insults, punctuated by obscenities..Agnes meant to stop Maria from turning the eleventh card, but her curiosity was equal to her apprehension..The dinner guest leaned back into the car, as though to retrieve something. Perhaps he, too, had been considerate enough to bring a small gift for his hostess..He vanished through some hole, some slit, some tear bigger than anything through which Tom flipped his quarters..On Thursday, December 28, employing forged driver's licenses and social-security cards as identification, Junior opened small savings accounts and also rented safe-deposit boxes for Pinchbeck and Gammoner at different banks with which he'd never previously done business, using the mailing addresses that he'd established earlier..Waking from a starry night in the Old West into electric light, gazing up into a blur of faces sans cowboy hats, Agnes felt someone moving a piece of ice in slow circles over her bare abdomen. Shivering as the cold water trickled down her sides, she tried to ask them why they were applying ice when she was already chilled to the bone, but she couldn't find her voice..She leaned against the apartment door for a long moment, holding on to the doorknob and to the thumb-turn of the second deadbolt, as though she were convinced that if she let go, she would float off the floor like a cloud-stuffed child.. "Tom, a couple minutes ago," Agnes said, "Celestina mentioned your. . . 'certain awareness.' Which is what exactly?" "The princess is correct," he acknowledged, revealing that this hand was still empty. Then he reached to the girl and plucked the quarter from her ear..She owned a public-relations firm specializing in artists, and over dinner she rhapsodized about the work of Jack Lientery. His current series of paintings-emaciated babies against backdrops of ripe fruit and other symbols of plenty-had critics swooning..Sklent came to mind, perhaps because of the strange drawing on the girl's sketch pad. Sklent at that Christmas Eve party, only a few months ago but a lifetime away. The theory of spiritual afterlife without a need for God. Prickly-bur spirits. Some hang around, haunting out of sheer mean stubbornness. Some fade away. Others reincarnate..They knew no one named Bartholomew, and she had never heard the name from him before, but she knew what he wanted. He was speaking of the son he would never see..In spite of the gloom, the boy's miraculous accomplishment was evident: his clothes and hair were dry as though he'd worn a coat and hood..With his startling combination of a Mediterranean complexion and rust-red hair, his good looks, and his fit physique, Paul had the exotic appearance of a pulp-fiction hero. In particular, he liked to imagine that he might pass for Doc Savage's brother.. "Your forgiveness won't make any of it right," he said, "nothing could, but it might start to give me a little peace." "See this?" He placed the pepper shaker in front of her on the room-service table and held the salt shaker concealed in his hand..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..With all twelve fragments destroyed, the curse should have been lifted from little Bartholomew: the threat of the unknown, violent enemy who was represented by the four knaves. Somewhere in the world, an evil man existed who would one day have killed Barty, but now his journey through life would take him elsewhere. Eleven saints had been given twelve shares of responsibility for lifting this curse.. "Six hundred ninety-five people were killed in three states. Winds so powerful that some of the bodies were thrown a mile and a half from where they were snatched off the ground." "Don't worry, love. I'll make sure the snap's are constructed so you can get it off me easily enough." 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.. "No, I don't see it," Chicane repeated. "There's no benefit to a meditation marathon. Twenty minutes is enough, man. Half an hour at the most. You relied on your internal clock, didn't you?" If he killed Bartholomew and got away clean, as he expected that he would, then he could subsequently return everything in the van to the apartment. He was just being prudent by planning for his future, because the future was, after all, the only place he lived..Shadows still perched throughout most of the room. They no longer reminded her of roosting birds, but of a featherless flock, leathery of wing and red of eye, with a taste for unspeakable feasts..Now Barty peered at the card,

smacked his lips, smiled, and said, "Ga." With a flatulent squawk of the butt trumpet, he soiled his diaper. Wonderful. Oh, perfect. So Neddy, a friend of Celestina's, knew that Junior, reputed to be a vicious sadist, had attended this reception under a false name. If Junior really was a sleazy pervert of such rococo tastes that he would be shunned even by the scum of the world, even by the deranged mutant offspring of a self-breeding hermaphrodite, then surely he was capable of murder, too. The pubescent physician returned with three colleagues, who crowded behind the privacy curtain to proclaim that none of them had ever seen any case remotely like this before. The oldest—a myopic, balding lump—insisted on asking Junior probing questions about his marital status, his family relationships, his dreams, and his self-esteem; the guy proved to be a clinical psychiatrist who speculated openly about the possibility of a psychosomatic component. Junior intended to add one stocky ghost to the party. Perhaps on a summer night in years to come, at the edge of the light fall from his Coleman lantern, a fisherman would see a semitransparent Vanadium providing entertainment with an ethereal quarter. 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. Sunday evening, here he was, cracking open four new decks, as if fresh cards might enable the magic to repeat. Livor mortis had already set in, blood draining to the lowest points of her body, leaving the fronts of her bare legs, one side of each bare arm, and her face ghastly pale. "Mrs. Lampion, in a case like this, I've found that the greatest mercy is directness. Your son has retinoblastoma. A malignancy of the retina." This momentous day. In every ending, new beginnings. But, thank God, no ending here. Celestina hardly knew Paul, and although he'd saved her mother's life, his offer raised a look of doubt from her. "I want you to adopt the baby." Before they could react, she hurried on: "I won't be twenty-one for four months yet, and even then they might give me trouble about adopting, even though I'm her aunt, because I'm single. But if you adopt her, I'll raise her. I promise I will. I'll take full responsibility. You don't have to worry that I'll regret it or that I'll ever want to drop her in your laps and escape the responsibility. She'll have to be the center of my life from here on. I understand that. I accept it. I embrace it." He had learned many things about himself on this momentous day—that he was more spontaneous than he had ever before realized, that he was willing to make grievous short-term sacrifices for long-term gain, that he was bold and daring—but perhaps the most important lesson was that he was a more sensitive person than he'd previously perceived himself to be and that this sensitivity, while admirable, was liable to undo him unexpectedly and at inconvenient times. Into darkness, Celestina sat down to dinner with her mother and her father in the dining room of the parsonage. Glass in the door next to Agnes cracked, dissolved. Pebbly blacktop like a dragon flank of glistening scales hissed past the broken window, inches from her face. He managed to hold the towel around his foot, but it grew dark red and disgustingly mushy. As quick as a snake strikes, Vanadium was much closer to the bed than he had been when he tossed the coin, at Junior's side now, leaning over the railing. "Naomi was six weeks pregnant." Her hands shook as she counted out the fare and the tip from her wallet. "I'm scared sick. Maybe you should just take me right back home." Celestina jammed the shaft of the crank into the casing socket. Wouldn't fit. Her hands were shaking. Steel fins on the shaft of the crank had to be lined up just-so with slots in the socket. She fumbled, fumbled. By the time all the details of mortuary and cemetery services were settled, Walter Panglo had a nervous tic in his left cheek. His eyes were open wide, as if he'd been so startled that his lids froze in a position of ascension, locked by a spasm of surprise. His hands must have grown clammy; he blotted them repeatedly on his suit. Celestina stared at the small, brown face, opening herself to the anger and hatred with which she had regarded this child in the operating room. The pendulous bellies of the rain-swollen clouds were no darker than when he had first come to the cemetery, yet they appeared more ominous now than earlier. Barty whispered: "The North Pole Society of Not Evil Adventurers is now in session." Furious, he squeezed off two shots. Passing the living-room archway, Tom saw Jacob in the armchair, under the reading lamp, slumped as if asleep over the book. His crimson bib confirmed that he wasn't just sleeping. He was no longer hopeful that they could have a future together. After sampling the Junior Cain thrill machine, Celestina would want more, as women always did, but the time for a meaningful romance had now passed. For all the anguish he'd been put through, however, he deserved the consolation of her sweet body at least once. A little compensation. Payback. Celestina looked up from the scarred top of the desk toward the fog-white sky beyond the window, from reality to the promise. She switched on the windshield wipers. Repeatedly, in the arc of cleared glass, the graveyard was revealed in sharp detail, and yet the place remained less than fully familiar to her. Her whole world had been changed by Barty's dry walk in wet weather. Jolene started to refill his coffee mug—then thought better of it. "Maybe you don't need more caffeine, Edom." Desperately trying to collect her wits, Agnes gazed out at the deluged graveyard, where the mournful trees and massed monuments were blurred by purling streams ceaselessly spilling down the windshield. Zedd taught in this world where dishonesty is the currency of social acceptance and financial success, you must practice some deceit to get along in life, but you must never lie to yourself, or you are left with no one to trust. "I'll come by at eight o'clock for breakfast," Wally suggested. "We have to set a date." Bressler but no Vanadium. A girl named Angel. Something was wrong here. Something was rotten. On the two-chair bed beside her mother, Angel issued small cries of distress in her sleep. Whatever presences flocked around her in the dream, they weren't baby chickens. When the ophthalmologist saw her misery, his kind face softened further, and his pity became palpable. 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. In a sudden desperate burst of action, Junior tore at the dead man's closed hand, sprang open the trap of fingers and palm—and did not find a quarter. Nor two dimes and a nickel. Nor five nickels. Nothing. Zip. Zero. The expectation with which Tom had been greeted on his

arrival was as thin as the air at Himalayan heights compared to the rich stew of anticipation now aboil..This declaration was received seriously by Edom and Jacob, as if the devil often strolled the streets of Bright Beach and from time had been known to snatch little babies from their mothers' and eat them with mustard..Frequently, people told Agnes that she should find an agent for Barty, as he was wonderfully photogenic; modeling and acting careers, they assured her, were his for the asking. Though her son was indeed a fine-looking lad, Agnes knew he wasn't as exceptionally handsome as many perceived him to be. Rather than his looks, what made Barty so appealing, what made him seem extraordinarily good-looking, were other qualities: an unusual gracefulness for a child, such a physical easiness in every movement and posture that it seemed as though some curious personal relationship with time had allowed him twenty years to become a three-year-old; an unfailingly affable temperament and quick smile that possessed his entire face, including his mesmerizing green blue eyes. Perhaps most affecting of all, his remarkable good health was expressed in the lustrous sheen of his thick hair, in the golden-pink glow of his summer-touched skin, in every physical aspect of him, until there were times when he seemed radiant..According to his wristwatch, the time was 9:05 in the morning on this momentous day..The machine, one in a bank of four, wasn't filled with ordinary newspapers, which cost only a dime, but with a raunchy tabloid aimed at heterosexual swingers..Onward he came, past the left front fender, gleefully hopping up and down, as if on a pogo stick, still waving..Professional magic was not a field in which many Negroes could find their way to success. Obadiah was one of a rare brotherhood..The ninth card was a jack of spades. Maria called it a knave of and at the sight of it, her bright smile dimmed.. "Yes. The dried root of a Brazilian plant, the ipecacuanha. It induces vomiting with great effectiveness. The active ingredient is a powdered white alkaloid called emetine."..of the deceased. This memorial was modest, neither large nor complicated in design. Nevertheless, often the carvers in this line of business followed days after the morticians, because the stones to which they applied their craft demanded more labor and less urgency than the cold bodies that rested under them..He had assumed that the dinner guest was Victoria's lover, but suddenly he realized that this might not be the case. The man might be nothing more than a friend. Her father or a brother. In which case the invitation to romance-posed by the coquettishly arranged wine and rose-would be so wildly inappropriate that the visitor would know at..When Seraphim's bastard baby was dead, evidence of paternity would die with it-and any claim for child support. Even Vanadium's stubborn, selfish, greedy, grubbing, vicious, psychotic, evil spirit would have to recognize that all hope of bringing Junior down was lost, and it would at last either dissipate in frustration or be reincarnated..He didn't know what he was looking for. He simply felt empowered to be the one conducting the surveillance for a change..With a bark of pain, chest to chest with defeat, the killer was borne downward by the fragrant weight, in a clink and clatter of brass handles..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.

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