

STAGE OF DESIRE NINETEENTH CENTURY FRENCH LITERARY ARTISTS AND THE

Down the stairs, through the ground floor, quickly, soundlessly, breath held at times, listening for the other's breathing, listening for the softest squeak of rubber-soled shoes, although the hard clack of cloven hoofs and a whiff of sulfur would not have been surprising. At last he went to the kitchen, full circle from the shiny quarter on the breakfast table to the quarter again. No Cain..The papermaker withdrew a thick wad of hundred-dollar bills from his envelope and, squinting, inspected the currency in the flickering light. "I'm leaving now, but you wait until movie's over." "What aren't you telling us?" her mother pressed, intuiting the existence of a larger story, if not the amazing nature of it..Junior couldn't imagine why some Negro stranger would want to intrude. He hoped there wouldn't be trouble..To have the best chance of becoming a master mechanic, any young apprentice needs a mentor. The art of total card control cannot be learned entirely from books and experimentation..He opened the solid doors on the bottom of the breakfront, did not find what he was looking for, checked in the sideboard next, and there it was, a small liquor supply. Scotch, gin, vodka. He selected a full bottle of vodka..By now, Junior realized that he had been locked in a meditative trance for at least eighteen hours. He had settled into the lotus position at five o'clock Monday afternoon-and Bob Chicane had shown up or their regular instruction session at eleven Tuesday morning..Suddenly and seriously crept out, Junior wanted to get away from this nut case. Yet he was frozen by morbid fascination..He'd listened to the message and thought it incomprehensible, of no import. Suddenly, tardy intuition told him that it could not have been any more important to him if it had been dead Naomi calling from beyond the grave to leave testimony for the detective..The bandaged man stormed up from the ruin of the living room, gauze fluttering around his lips as his hard exhalations seemed to prove that he wasn't a long-dead pharaoh reanimated to punish some heedless archaeologist who had ignored all warnings and violated his tomb. So this wasn't a Weir Tales moment..Already another contraction racked her, so intense that the pain was not limited to her lower back and abdomen, but seared the length of her spine, like an electric current leaping vertebra to vertebra. Her breath pinched in her chest as though her lungs had collapsed..honor and family. This was life, and everyone lived his life in the shadow of one solemn obligation or another.."Well, as years pass, they're going to be a financial burden, if nothing else, so I'm glad I've got a little surprise for you." "Sure. There's lots of places where he didn't get shot, but there's places where he got shot and died, too." "Yes, you did, and it's exactly what experience has no doubt taught you to think. But I'm forty-seven and you're twenty-". He feared that suicide was a ticket to Hell, and he knew that sinless Perri was not waiting for him in those lower realms..Inevitably, he had to wonder if Naomi had kept her pregnancy secret because, indeed, she suspected that the child wasn't her husband's..Only one member of the distant funeral party did not disperse toward the line of cars on the service road. A man in a dark suit headed downhill, between the headstones and the monuments, directly toward Naomi's grave..In a stolen black Dodge Charger 440 Magnum, Junior Cain shot out of Spruce Hills on as straight a trajectory to Eugene as the winding roads of southern Oregon would allow, staying off Interstate 5, where the policing was more aggressive..Leaning across the front seat, he lowered the passenger's window six inches. Then he lowered the driver's-side window an equal distance.."Thank you, Nurse Bressler," he said most solemnly, matching her tone, barely able to control the urge to glance at her, smile, and give her another preview of his quick, pink tongue..Fourth and last, he was surprised that Kickmule was a legitimate surname. This information wasn't of immediate importance to him, but if ever his Gammoner and Pinchbeck identities were compromised and he required false ID in a new name, he would call himself Eric Kickmule. Or possibly Wolfgang Kickmule. That sounded really tough. No one would mess with a man named Kickmule..The nurse noted that the maximum weight capacity of the elevator allowed all of them to take the same cab, if they didn't mind being squeezed a little..The guesswork of a wizard is close to knowledge, though he may not know what it is he knows. The first sign of Otter's gift, when he was two or three years old, was his ability to go straight to anything lost, a dropped nail, a mislaid tool, as soon as he understood the word for it. And as a boy one of his dearest pleasures had been to go alone out into the countryside and wander along the lanes or over the hills, feeling through the soles of his bare feet and throughout his body the veins of water underground, the lodes and knots of ore, the lay and interfolding of the kinds of rock and earth. It was as if he walked in a great building, seeing its passages and rooms, the descents to airy caverns, the glimmer of branched silver in the walls; and as he went on, it was as if his body became the body of earth, and he knew its arteries and organs and muscles as his own. This power had been a delight to him as a boy. He had never sought any use for it. It had been his secret..As Lipscomb picked up the freshened baby, Grace said, "That was as effective as any minister's wife could've been with an impossible parishioner-and, oh, do I wish we could sometimes be that pointed." "-though this Tom now has a rhinoceros-smacked face, this other Tom, in his own world, has an ordinary face. Poor him, so ordinary."..Testing Celestina's nerves as fully as Barty had tested his mother's, Angel pulled-levered -shinnied-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..Shortly after nine-thirty in the morning, they landed in Eugene, and the cab driver who conveyed Junior to the town's largest shopping center spent more time staring at his afflicted passenger in the rearview mirror than he did watching the road. Junior got out of the taxi and paid through the driver's open window. The cabbie didn't even wait for his fiery-faced fare to turn completely away before he

crossed himself. Maria fished another chip from the sweating carafe, rejected it, and scooped out a larger piece. She hesitated, staring at it for a moment, and then spooned it between Agnes's lips. "Water can be broken if it will be first made into ice." Dinner was available in the lounge. Junior enjoyed a superb filet mignon with a split of fine Cabernet Sauvignon. Neddy, dressed for work but overdressed for his own funeral, slumped against the wall, head bowed, chin on his chest. His pale hands were splayed at his sides, as though he were trying to strike chords from the floor tiles. Kitchen to dining room, dining room to hallway, keeping his back to the wall, easing quickly along, then into the foyer. Wait here, listening. He didn't want to lean inside and peer over the front seat. He had no weapon. He would be unbalanced, vulnerable. 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. The shriek of the sirens groaned into silence. The police must have pulled to the curb in the street. As Junior stood at Seraphim's grave, his breath smoked from him in the still night air, as though he were a dragon. Maybe the bright side was that the musician hadn't either wet his pants or taken a dump while in his death throes. Sometimes, during a comparatively slow death like strangulation, the victim lost control of all bodily functions. He'd read it in a novel, something from the Book-of-the-Month Club and therefore both life-enriching and reliable. Probably not Eudora Welty. Maybe Norman Mailer. Anyway, the men's room didn't smell as fresh as a flower shop, but it didn't reek, either. While the doctor proceeded with his evening rounds, the nurse remained with Junior until it was clear that the tranquilizer had calmed him and that he was no longer in danger of succumbing to another bout of hemorrhagic vomiting. Nurses were supposed to be angels of mercy. She had shown him no mercy. And she was certainly no angel. Vanadium's wounds were too grievous to pass for accidental injuries. Even if there were some way to disguise them through clever staging, no one would believe that Victoria had died in a freak fall and that Vanadium, rushing to her side, had slipped and tumbled and sustained mortal head injuries, as well. Such a strong whiff of slapstick would put even the Spruce Hills police on to the scent of murder. Of course, Angel might have been playing around with the talking book. Or, even though she'd left the dolls downstairs, she might have been filling the time until Barty's return by having a nice chat with Miss Pixie and Miss Velveeta. She had other voices, too, for other dolls, and one for a sock puppet named Smelly. She shivered, and Edom, thinking that she had caught a chill ripped off his suit jacket and draped it over her shoulders. "Do you want me to call and confirm how Vanadium was harassing you up here?" asked Magusson. "I don't have to graduate in the spring of next year. I can take fewer classes, graduate the spring after. That's no big deal." To the window in the driver's door, Barty came with a repertoire of comic expressions, mugging at his mother, sticking one finger up his nose and exaggeratedly boring with it as though exploring for nasal nuggets. "Not scary, Mommy!" With everyone in the diner now aware of Junior, with every head turned toward him and with every wary eye tracking him, he dropped the bun cap and the mustard dispenser on the floor. Barging through the swinging gate at the end of the lunch counter, he entered the narrow work area behind it. Draped across his midsection, the terrible cold weight had chilled his flesh; but now his bone marrow prickled with ice at the thought of the birthmarked detective sitting silently in the dark, watching. Junior would have preferred dealing with Naomi, dead and risen and seriously pissed, rather than with this dangerously patient man. He said this as though confident Agnes would understand what he meant, with a smile and with a glint in his eyes that almost became a wink, as if they were members of a secret society in which these three repeated words were code, embodying a complex meaning other than what was apparent to the uninitiated. The sedative was mild, but Phimie was asleep in mere minutes. She was exhausted by her long ordeal and by her recent lack of sleep. Celestina almost begged off, almost told him that she had no interest in whatever curiosity of medicine or physiology he might have witnessed. The only miracle that would have mattered, Phimie's survival, had not been granted. Eventually he approached the door between the dining room and the kitchen. He paused there, listening. A cheer went up from family and friends, and Agnes could only imagine what it must feel like to be Barty, both blind and blessed, his heart as rich in courage as in kindness. Posing as a counselor with Catholic Family Services, he phoned each listed Bartholomew, with a question related to his or her recent adoption. Those who expressed bafflement, and who claimed not to have adopted a child, were generally stricken from his list. These kids were the same age, yet listening to them was akin to hearing Angel do her charming shtick with an adult who had a lot of patience, a sense of humor, and an awareness of generational ironies. Looking toward the nearest window, where the wet night kissed the glass, he said, "Lawn sprinklers?" He planned, as soon as they took him out of his cell, to use the old Changers spell of self-transformation and so escape. Surely his life was in danger, and it would be all right to use the spell? Only he couldn't decide what to turn himself into—a bird, or a wisp of smoke, what would be safest? But while he was thinking about it, Losen's men, used to wizard's tricks, drugged his food and he ceased to think of anything at all. They dumped him into a mule-cart like a sack of oats. When he showed signs of reviving during the journey, one of them bashed him on the head, remarking that he wanted to make sure he got his rest. This morning, as Barty stood to one side listening, his mother asked Maria for poems by Emily Dickinson. Those spike-sharp eyes, - tenpenny gray, nailed Junior to the bed, pinning him for scrutiny. 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. When he reported for a physical and a reassessment of his draft classification, on Wednesday, December 15, he left the insert in his hitching shoe; however, he limped like old Walter Brennan, the actor, hitching around the ranch in *The Real McCoys*. "You look as if you've seen a ghost," said Vinnie, and Agnes wished the threat were as simple as a restless spirit, groaning and rattling its chains, like Dickens's Marley come to Ebenezer Scrooge on Christmas Eve. Through the door came the sound of running water splashing in a sink. Neddy washing his hands. As before, the name tolled through him like the ominous note

of the deepest bass bell in a cathedral carillon, struck on a cold midnight..Opening his eyes blinking back his tears just as more agonizing contractions knotted his abdomen, he could see ribbons of red in the watery green mess that gushed from him. Bright red. Gastric blood would be dark. This must be pharyngeal blood. Unless an artery had ruptured in his stomach, torn by the incredible violence of these intransigent spasms, in which case he was puking his life away..Lipscomb shifted his gaze from the street below to the source of the rain. "Phimie was not gone long, perhaps a minute-a minute and ten seconds at most-and when she was with us again, it was clear from her condition that the cardiac arrest was most likely secondary to a massive cerebral incident. She was disoriented, paralysis on the right side ... with the distortion of the facial muscles that you saw. Her speech was slurred at first, but then something strange happened. . .people that he was innocent and, in fact, constitutionally incapable of premeditated murder..To her mother, Celestina said, "What did you mean when you said you'd heard all about Barty here?"..interminably against the ignition plate before, at last, he was able to insert it. "Should be a boy, because then you'll always have a man around the house."..a time, from the carafe on the nightstand. She spooned the ice into Junior's mouth not with the businesslike..Whereas Edom feared the wrath of nature, Jacob knew that the true hand of doom was the hand of humankind..First, he searched immediately around the dead man, figuring that the watch might still be snared on the coat belt or on one of the sleeve straps. No luck..The tenderness with which Grace acceded to Phimie's desire, at the expense of her own peace of mind, filled Celestina with emotion. She'd always admired and loved her mother to an extent that no words-or work of art-could adequately describe, but never more than now.."Why should I be afraid of a stumbling blind boy?" asked Junior again. But this time the words issued from him in a different tone of voice, because suddenly he sensed something knowing in this boy's attitude, if not in his manufactured eyes, a quality similar to what the girl exhibited..He was astonished that adoption records would be sealed and so closely guarded when a child was being placed with a member of its immediate family, with its mother's sister..Thursday evening, his third in the hotel, he returned to the lounge for cocktails and another steak. The same tuxedoed pianist provided the entertainment..At the open kitchen door, arms laden with a stack of four bakery boxes, her mother said, "Will you get those last four pies for me there on the table? And don't jostle them, dear."..During this same period, having subscribed to the opera, Junior attended a performance of Wagner's *The Ring of the Nibelung*..And though Barty was not shy, neither was he a show-off. He didn't seek praise for his accomplishments, and in fact, they were little known outside of his immediate family. His satisfaction came entirely from learning, exploring, growing..If Junior had not been such a rational man, schooled in logic and reason by the books of Caesar Zedd, he might have snapped there in the street, before the photograph of Seraphim, might have begun to shake and sob and babble until he wound up in a psychiatric ward. But although his trembling knees felt no more supportive than aspic, they didn't dissolve under him. He couldn't breathe for a minute, and his vision darkened at the periphery, and the noise of passing traffic suddenly sounded like the agonized shrieks of people tortured beyond endurance, but he held fast to his wits long enough to realize that the name under the photo, which served as the centerpiece of a poster, read Celestina White in four-inch letters, not Seraphim..The various flavors of canned soda were always racked in the same order, allowing Barty to select what he wanted without error. He got orange for Angel, root beer for himself, and closed the refrigerator..IN HIS FORD VAN filled with needlepoint and Sklent and Zedd, Junior Cain-Pinchbeck to the world-left the Bay Area by a back door. He took State Highway 24 to Walnut Creek, which might or might not have walnuts, but which offered a mountain and a state park named for the devil: Mount Diablo. State Highway 4 to Antioch brought him to a crossing of the river delta west of Bethel Island. Bethel, for those who had taken good advanced courses in vocabulary improvement, meant "sacred place."..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..Forward, under the spreading black branches of the massive tree, receiving continuous green-tongued murmurs of encouragement from the breeze-stirred leaves, Barty was Barty, determined and undaunted..He nodded. "The effect not only comes before a cause in this case, but completely without a cause. The effect is staying dry in the rain, but the cause-supposedly walking in a dryer world-never occurs. Only the idea of it."..Near midnight, she returned to her apartment. Lights out, in bed, staring at the ceiling, she was unable to sleep..As she clambered through the open door into Celestina's lap, the girl said, "Uncle Wally gave me an Oreo."..Highly impressed by the spot-on hyena scream with which Frieda had purged herself of the childhood emotional trauma inflicted by an authoritarian grandmother, Junior asked her to go out with him..Junior found no answers before the owner of the diner blocked him from proceeding out of the kitchen into the storeroom and the service alley beyond. Simultaneously sweating and chilled, Junior cursed him, and the confrontation became ugly..While waiting for inspiration to present him with a better strategy, Junior returned to the telephone book in search of the right Bartholomew. Not the directory for Spruce Hills and the surrounding county, but the one for San Francisco..As if vengeful spirits weren't trouble enough, he had for three years been struggling unwittingly against the terrible power of the minister's curse, black Baptist voodoo that made his life miserable. He knew now why he had been plagued by violent nervous emesis, by epic diarrhea, by hideously disfiguring hives. The failure to find a heart mate, the humiliation with Renee Vivi, the two nasty cases of gonorrhoea, the disastrous meditative catatonia, the inability to learn French and German, his loneliness, his emptiness, his thwarted attempts to find and kill the bastard boy born of Phimie's womb: All these things and more, much more, were the hateful consequences of the vicious, vindictive voodoo of that hypocritical Christian. As a highly self-improved, fully evolved, committed man who was comfortable with his raw instincts, Junior should be sailing through life on calm seas, under perpetually sunny skies, with his sails always full of wind, but instead he was constantly cruelly battered and storm-tossed through an unrelenting night, not

because of any shortcomings of mind or heart, or character, but because of black magic..He stepped into the house, quietly closed the front door, and examined the bottle. The glass was thick, especially at the base, where a large punt--a deep indentation--encouraged sediment to gather along the rim rather than across the entire bottom of the bottle. This design feature secondarily contributed to the strength of the container. Evidently he had hit her with the bottom third of the bottle, which could most easily withstand the blow..Softened by a Shantung shade, the lamplight was golden on his small smooth face, but sapphire and emerald in his eyes..For an instant, she appeared to be frowning. Then he realized this couldn't be a frown. It must be a smoldering look of desire..The funeral was at two o'clock, after which family and friends of the deceased would gather here in the parsonage for a social, to break bread together and to share their memories of the loved one lost..On the morning of November third, Barty asked Maria to inquire of Agnes what she would like to have read to her. "Then when she answers you, just turn and leave the room. I'll take it from there." A pink spot in the center of Victoria's forehead marked the point of impact. Soon it would be an ugly bruise. The skull bone did not appear to have been cratered..He might suspect, but he couldn't know. He would but would be left with at least a shred of doubt about Junior's..Bartholomew was an uncommon name, however, and logic suggested that if the baby was now called Bartholomew, he'd been named for his adoptive dad. Therefore, a search of the listings might be fruitful..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..ONWARD THROUGH THIS Monday, January 17, this momentous day, when the ending of one thing is the beginning of another..Although the piano was at some distance and the restaurant was a little noisy, Kathleen recognized the tune at once. She looked up from her veal, her eyes full of merriment..Everyone was silent. The day was morgue-still. The crows had fled the sky, but a single hawk gilded soundlessly, like justice with its prey in sight, high above the tower..Phimie's eyes widened, her hand tightened painfully on her sister's hand, her entire body convulsed, thrashed, and she cried, "Unnn, unnn, unnn!"..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..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..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..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..He was simplifying and combining concepts, but he knew no other way to quickly give them a feel for the wonder, the enigma, the sheer spookiness of the world revealed by quantum mechanics..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..It was hard for him to lie. He thought he was awkward at it because he had no practice. Hound knew better. He knew that magic itself resists untruth. Conjuring, sleight of hand, and false commerce with the dead are counterfeits of magic, glass to the diamond, brass to the gold. They are fraud, and lies flourish in that soil. But the art of magic, though it may be used for false ends, deals with what is real, and the words it works with are the true words. So true wizards find it hard to lie about their art. In their heart they know that their lie, spoken, may change the world..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..In the gallery windows, eight of the nine sculptures were so disturbing that many passersby, catching sight of them, blanched and looked away and hurried on. Not everyone can be a connoisseur..The ghost cop was forty feet behind him, beyond ranks of other pedestrians, every one of whom might as well have been faceless now, smooth and featureless from brow to chin, because suddenly Junior could see no countenance other than that of the walking dead man. The haunting visage bobbed up and down as the grim spirit strode along, vanishing and reappearing and then vanishing again among all the bobbing and swaying heads of the intervening multitudes..terrified, the thorns pricking so close to his eyes, green points combing his lashes. He's too weak to resist, disabled..Sometimes he thought he walked for Perri, using the steps she had stored up and never taken, giving expression to her unfulfilled yearning to travel. At other times, he thought he walked for the solitude that allowed him to remember their life in fine detail--or to forget. To find peace--or seek adventure. To gain understanding through contemplation---or to scrub all thought from his mind. To see the world or to be rid of it. Perhaps he hoped that coyotes would stalk him through a bleak twilight or a mountain lion set upon him on a hungry dawn, or a drunk driver run him down..Besides, even before he had fully turned on his charm, before he had shown her that a ride on the Junior Cain love machine would make other men seem forever inadequate, Renee was so hot for him that it might have been wise to open a bottle of champagne to douse her when spontaneous combustion destroyed her Chanel suit..Barty, at the head of the table, sensed Mary's approach only as she was about to touch him. She put a hand on his arm and said, "Daddy, will you turn your chair away from the table and let me sit on your lap?"..To the foot of the bed slouched the third and final Hackachak: twenty-four-year-old Kaitlin, Naomi's big sister. Kaitlin was the unfortunate sister, having inherited her looks from her father and her personality equally from both parents. A peculiar coppery cast enlivened her brown eyes, and in a certain slant of light, her angry glare could flash as red as blood..He didn't rely on sounds to help him find his way, though here and there one served as a marker of his progress. Twelve paces from his room, a floorboard squeaked almost inaudibly under the hallway carpet, which told him that he was seventeen paces from the head of the stairs. He didn't need that muffled creak to know exactly where he

was, but it always reassured him..He had sworn this vow before. An argument could be made that he had broken it..In the cab, pulling into traffic, the driver said, "The mister tells me you're the star of the show tonight."..On Tuesday evening, September 7, after half an hour in the lotus position, thinking about nothing whatsoever but a white pin with two black bands at its neck and the number I painted on its head, Junior went to bed at eleven o'clock and set his alarm for three in the morning, when he intended to shoot himself..When Agnes pressed for a diagnosis, Dr. Chan quietly pleaded the need to gather more information. After Barty had seen the oncologist and had additional tests, he and his mother would return here in the afternoon to receive a diagnosis and counseling in treatment options..July 6, 1944, in Hartford, Connecticut, a fire broke out in the great tent of the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus at two-forty in the afternoon, while six thousand patrons watched the Wallendas, a world-famous high-wire troupe, ascend to begin their act. By three o'clock, the fire burned out, following the collapse of the flaming tent, leaving one hundred sixty-eight dead. Another five hundred people were badly injured, but one thousand circus animals-including forty lions and forty elephants-were not harmed."..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.."A friend's daughter. They say she died in a traffic accident down in San Francisco. She was even younger than Naomi."..The decision had already been made that Grace would move in with Celestina and then-following the wedding-with Celestina and Wally. In Spruce Hills, she had dear friends whom she would miss, but there was nothing else in Oregon to draw her back, other than the narrow plot beside Harrison, where she expected eventually to be buried. The parsonage fire had destroyed all her personal effects and every family treasure from Celestina's grade-school spelling-bee medals to the last precious photograph. She wanted only to be close to her one remaining daughter and her granddaughter, to be part of the new life that they would build with Wally Lipscomb..His homely face was long and narrow, as though pulled into that shape by the weight of his responsibilities. In other circumstances, however, his generous mouth might have shaped an appealing smile; and his green eyes had in them the compassion of someone who himself had known great loss.."Yes," she admitted, her face still close to his, "I'm afraid. But Dr. Chan is a fine surgeon, and this is a very fine hospital."..Although he had made no effort to summon them, tears spilled from Junior's closed eyes. They weren't drawn from him by thoughts of poor Naomi. These next few days-perhaps weeks-were going to be tedious, until he could have Nurse Victoria Bressler. Under the circumstances, he had good reason to feel sorry for himself..Yet he brooded even at breakfast, in spite of the consolation of clotted cream and berries, raisin scones and cinnamon butter. In better worlds, wiser Tom Vanadiums chose different tactics that resulted in less misery than this, in a far swifter conveyance of Enoch Cain to the halls of justice. But he was none of those Tom Vanadiums. He was only this Tom, flawed "land struggling, and he couldn't take comfort in the fact that elsewhere he had proved to be a better man..This saving spirit retreated, and in his place came a young paramedic in a black-and-yellow rain slicker over hospital whites. "Just want to be sure there's no spinal injury before we move you. Can you squeeze my hands?"..Junior had left the front door locked, because if unlocked, it would look as though he had wanted to facilitate their entry, and it would make them suspicious of the whole scenario..The thorns had not been stripped from the long stem of the white rose. Vanadium clutched it so tightly that the sharp points punctured his meaty palm. He seemed to be unaware of his wounds..Edom did as asked. Then he cut the deck into two approximately equal stacks when requested to do so..Still on her knees, she raised the weapon and realized that she was going to shoot the maniac in the back, that she had no other choice, because her inexperience didn't allow her to aim for a leg or an arm. The moral dilemma overwhelmed her, but so did an image of Phimie lying dead in bloody sheets on the surgery table. She pulled the trigger and rocked with the recoil.

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