

AGINTA VULGATA UND LUTHER UEBERSETZUNG SO WIE DER WICHTIGSTEN VA

With his mother, his uncles, and Maria hovering just two steps behind, Barty followed the driveway, not bothering with the cane, keeping his right foot on the concrete, his left foot on the grass, until he came to a jog in the pavement, which apparently he'd been seeking. He stopped, facing due north, considered for a moment, and then pointed due west: "The oak tree's over there." A sudden strange weakness, a formless dread, dropped Agnes out of her crouch and onto her knees beside the boy. He hit Celestina with the big question, the huge question, just as she paused in her babbling to suck in a deep breath, the better to spout even more nonsense, whereupon this panicky inhalation caught in her breast, caught so stubbornly that she was certain she would need the attention of paramedics to start breathing again, but then Wally popped open the box, revealing a lovely engagement ring, the sight of which made the trapped breath explode from her, and then she was breathing fine, although snuffling and crying and just generally a mess. "I love you, Wally." Antihypertensive drugs were administered intravenously, and Phimie was confined to bed, attached to a heart monitor. "I suspect," Tom said, "that any job you set your mind to, you'd be as good as you are at teeth." With the great tree ninety degrees to his left, he was able to locate the back-porch steps at forty-five degrees. He pointed with the cane, which otherwise he had not used. "The porch?" "Peach, raisin, walnut pies," Agnes said, "with regular bottom crust and a chocolate-crackle top crust." 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." Faiths and inhibiting rules that confused humanity, when he was sufficiently enlightened to believe only in himself, he would be able to trust his instincts, for they would be free of society's toxic views, and he would be assured of success and happiness if always he followed these gut feelings. Reverend White's murder received significant coverage throughout the nation, especially in West Coast papers, because of its perceived racial motivation and because it involved the burning of a parsonage. 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. Nolly finally disturbed the quiet: "Well, sir ... you're quite a psychologist." Angel was adamant: "Nope. I could learn that. Like dressing myself and saying thank-you." "Your mother's an artist. Besides, you wouldn't want to put poor Mrs. Ormwall out of a job, would you?" Because he genuinely liked women and hoped always to please them, always to be discreet and chivalrous and giving, Junior did as she wished, spinning a vivid account of the grisly vengeance he would take if ever Seraphim told anyone what he'd done to her. Vlad the Impaler, the historical inspiration for Brain Stoker's Dracula--thank you, Book-of-the-Month Club--could not have imagined bloodier or more horrific tortures and mutilations than those that Junior promised to visit upon the reverend, his wife, and Seraphim herself. Pretending to terrorize the girl excited him, and he was perceptive enough to see that she was equally excited by pretending to be terrorized. She left him sore in places that had never been sore before. Yet he was more stressed out on Thursday than he'd been on Wednesday. And had Phimie, retrieved from death by the resuscitation procedures of the surgical team, repaid Nella's kindness with her own stunning message to Lipscomb? He lived high, on Russian Hill, in a limestone-clad building with carved Victorian detail. His one-bedroom unit included a roomy kitchen with breakfast nook and a spacious living room with windows looking down on twisty Lombard Street. The driver's door opened, shoving aside a damaged tea table, and a man climbed out of the Pontiac. "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. This time, he vowed never to kill again, except in self-defense, regardless of the provocation. This tougher condition pleased him. No one achieved significant self-improvement by setting low standards for himself. Since he knew where Celestina would be on January 12, there was no point in taking risks to find her sooner. He had plenty of time to prepare for their encounter, time to savor the sweet anticipation...nor cruel, nor hateful, nor envious, nor mean," Phimie recited, "for all these are sicknesses of this fallen world." With his ringleted yellow hair, coiled mustache, and haughty right eye, this was a jack that looked as if he might be a knave in the worst sense of the word. In a pew in Old St. Mary's Church, in Chinatown, Junior took delivery of the lock-release gun and the untraceable 9-mm pistol with the custom-machined silencer, as previously arranged. The church was deserted at ten o'clock in the morning. The shadowy interior and the menacing religious figures gave him the creeps. He could have killed Vanadium while the cop slept; however, that would be far less satisfying than engaging in a little psychological warfare and leaving the devious bastard alive to suffer remorse when two more children died under his watch. 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. The kids insisted on knowing what was meant by the line about the chicken, and this led to the laying of a coopful of Why-did-the-chicken-cross-the-road jokes, which Edom and Jacob had memorized in childhood as an act of rebellion against their humorless father. In addition to delivering a honey-raisin pear pie, Agnes had come to offer Obadiah Sepharad a year's work-not performing magic, but talking about it. During this same period, having subscribed to the opera, Junior attended a performance of Wagner's The Ring of the Nibelung. Her shaking threatened her composure. She was Barty's mother and father, his only rock, and she must always be strong for him. She clenched her teeth and tensed her body and gradually quieted the tremors by an act of will. By Friday morning, September 10, little more than forty-eight hours after the shooting, he felt good and was in fine spirits. To see his newborn baby girl, Barty shared the sight of other Bartys, and he so adored this little wrinkled Mary that he sustained his vision all day, until a thunderous migraine became too much to bear and a sudden frightening slurring of speech drove him back to the comfort of blindness. Strapped to the bracing board, semi-immobilized to prevent the accidental dislodgement of the

intravenous feed, Junior's right arm felt half numb, stiff from disuse.. "I'd give anything if it hadn't happened," he said earnestly. And now a tortured note wrung wet emotion from his voice "I only wish it had been me who died." The old woman crumpled with a papery rustle, as though she were an elaborately folded piece of origami. She would be unconscious for a while, and after she came around, she probably wouldn't remember who she was, let alone what make of car she'd been driving, until Junior was well out of Eugene.. Happy weekend. His attitude amazed her, and his strength in the face of darkness gave her courage.. Pecan cakes, cinnamon custard pies boxed in insulated coolers, gifts wrapped with bright paper and glittery ribbons. Agnes Lampion made deliveries to those friends who were on her list of the needful, but also to friends who were blessed with plenty. The sight of each beloved face, each embrace, each kiss, each smile, each cheerfully spoken "Merry Christmas" at every stop fortified her heart for the sad task awaiting her when all gifts were given.. "Come with me," Paul Damascus said at once. "To Bright Beach. It is far away from San Francisco, and he'd never think of looking for you there. Why would he? You've no connection to the place. I've got a house with enough room. You're welcome. And you wouldn't be among strangers." This Monday morning in Oregon was bleak, with the swollen, dark bellies of rain clouds swagging low over the cemetery, a dreary send-off for Naomi, even though rain was not yet falling.. Every mother also believes that her baby is smarter than other babies. Sadly, time and the child's choices in life usually require her to adjust her opinion as she never will in the matter of physical beauty.. Bent like an ape, he humped the musician north along the alley. The original cobblestone pavement had been coated with blacktop, but in places the modern material had cracked and worn away, providing a treacherously uneven surface made even more treacherous by a skin of moisture shed by the fog. He stumbled and slipped repeatedly, but he used his anger to keep his balance and be a winner, until he found a distant enough dumpster.. She had put aside a half-finished pencil portrait of Phimie to develop several of Nella Lombardi.. Paul in the guest room again. Sweeping a bedside lamp to the floor, lifting the nightstand.. Phimie's speech had been slurred later, as well, immediately following the birth of the baby, when she had struggled to convey her desire to name her daughter Angel.. "Oh, it doesn't mean you're nervous in that sense. Nervous in this case means psychologically induced. Grief, Enoch. brief and shock and horror-they can have profound physical effects." "Just now." Although Angel tried to sound nonchalant, she was trembling. "I'm not sure I can do it again." He wanted an explanation, but no one could give him the one that he needed, because nobody but he himself knew the significance and symbolism of the quarter.. To the waiter, Nolly was Nolly, Kathleen was Mrs. Wulfstan, and Tom Vanadium was sir--though not the usual perfunctorily polite sir, but sir with deferential emphasis. Tom was unknown to the waiter, but his shattered face gave him gravitas; besides, he possessed a quality, quite separate from carriage and demeanor and attitude, an ineffable something, that inspired respect and even trust.. On this occasion, however, he couldn't have focused on a book even if he'd had the strength to hold it. The fierce paroxysms that clenched his guts also destroyed his ability to concentrate.. Sunday, Junior hid out from Scamp, using his Ansaphone to screen her calls, and worked with such astonishing focus on his needlepoint pillows that he forgot to go to bed that night. He fell asleep over his needles at ten o'clock Monday morning.. As luck would have it," the nun said, "Dr. Lipscomb was in the when it happened. He'd just delivered another baby under. He usually ate lunch alone in his office. The room was the size of an elevator, but of course didn't go up or down. It went sideways, however, in the sense that herein Paul was transported into wondrous lands of adventure.. Tom proceeded, "is that an infinite number of realities exist, other worlds parallel to ours, which we can't see. For example ... worlds in which, because of the specific decisions and actions of certain people on both sides, Germany won the last great war. And other worlds in which the Union lost the Civil War. And worlds in which a nuclear war has already been fought between the U.S. and Soviets." Edom, who had never made it big, medium, or little, watched his sister blur before him. He strove to contain the shimmering hotness in his eyes. His love was not for magic, and his pride was not in any skill he possessed, for he possessed none worth noting. His love was for his good sister; she was his pride, too, and he felt that his small life had precious meaning as long as he was able to drive her on days like this, carry her pies, and occasionally make her smile.. Instead, her father asked, "Is this emotion talking, Celie, or is this brain as much as heart?" "Thank you, Dr. Lipscomb. I'll keep track of what you're losing every month, and someday I'll pay it back to you." When he pushed Naomi, profit was the motive. He killed Victoria and Vanadium in self-defense. Those three deaths were necessary.. Crouching beside the boy as he rubbed a brighter shine onto the granite, Agnes said, "Barty, honey, why are you ... Vanadium understood the depth of his old friend's pain, and he knew that the anguish over the loss of a child could make the best of men act out of emotion rather than good judgment, and so he accepted Harrison's preference to let the matter rest. When enough time passed for reflection, what Vanadium ultimately decided was that of the two of them, Harrison was much the stronger in his faith, and that he himself, perhaps for the rest of his life, would be more comfortable behind a badge than behind a Roman collar.. It wasn't as if this was Junior's first encounter with a dead body. In the past few years, he'd become as comfortable with the deceased as any mortician might be. They were as unremarkable to him as cupcakes were to a baker.. Panic set in when he began to wonder if these intestinal spasms were going to prevent him from leaving Spruce Hills. In fact, what if they required hospitalization?. Jacob intended to carry the luggage, and Edom announced that he would carry Barty. The boy, however, insisted on making his own way to the house.. During Barty's hospitalization, they had graduated from the young adult novels by Robert Heinlein to some of the same author's science fiction for general audiences. Now, pajamaed and in bed, with his sunglasses on the nightstand but his padded eye patches still in place, Barty listened, rapt, to the beginning of Double Star. Regardless of her other successes or failures as a parent, Agnes intended to make certain that Barty never lacked hope, that meaning and purpose flowed through the boy as constantly as blood.. Turning away from the window, Tom met her gaze. His smoke-gray eyes looked frosted, as though the fog ghosts had passed through the window and possessed

him. But then the flame on the table candle flared in a draft; lambent light melted the chill from his eyes, and she saw again the warmth and the beautiful sorrow that had impressed her before..Acutely aware that someone with more need than patience might soon rap at the locked door, Junior dropped back into the men's room..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..This rosarium was Edom's only relationship with nature that did not inspire terror in him. Agnes believed that Joey's enthusiasm for the restoration of the garden was, in part, the reason why Edom had not tamed as far inward as Jacob and why he'd remained better able than his twin to function beyond the walls of his apartment..AFTER SPENDING Wednesday as a tourist, Junior began to look for a suitable apartment on Thursday. In spite of his new wealth, he did not intend to pay hotel-room rates for an extended period..Finally wimping out completely, Parkhurst left the room. The heavy door sighed softly shut, silencing the squeak of rubber-soled shoes, the swish of starched uniforms, and other noises made by the busy nurses in the corridor..By the time Junior passed the three offices and found the men's room, Neddy had occupied it. The door was locked, which must mean this was a single-occupant john..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..He warily surveyed those around him as he walked, and looked over his shoulder from time to time. On one of these backward glances, he was unnerved but not surprised to see Vanadium's specter..Dear Lord, how she loved her sugarpie, her little M&M. Three years had passed in what seemed like a month, and although there had been stress and struggle, too few hours in every day, less time for her art than she would have liked, and little or no time for herself, she wouldn't have traded being blindsided by motherhood for any amount of wealth, not for anything in the world ... except to have Phimie back. Angel was the moon, the sun, the stars, and all the comets streaking through infinite galaxies: an ever-shining light..The young man raised his voice to be heard above the gobbling of the art turkeys. "No, sir. He just asked where the men's room was."..Onward he came, past the left front fender, gleefully hopping up and down, as if on a pogo stick, still waving..Reluctantly, Jacob finally returned the cards to the packs and admitted to himself that superstition had seized him and would not let go. Somewhere in the world was a knave, a human monster-even worse, according to Maria, a man as fearsome as the devil himself-and for reasons unknown, this beast wanted to harm little Barty, an innocent baby. By some grace that Jacob could not understand, they had been warned, through the cards, that the knave was coming. They had been warned..In her campaign to keep her weight gain to a minimum, anorexia was her ally. She learned to find pleasure in hunger pangs..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..In Losen's service was a man who called himself Hound, because, as he said, he had a nose for witchery. His employment was to sniff Losen's food and drink and garments and women, anything that might be used by enemy wizards against him; and also to inspect his warships. A ship is a fragile thing in a dangerous element, vulnerable to spells and hexes. As soon as Hound came aboard the new galley he scented something. "Well, well," he said, "who's this?" He walked to the helm and put his hand on it. "This is clever," he said. "But who is it? A newcomer, I think." He sniffed appreciatively. "Very clever," he said..Stepping into her digs was like passing through a time machine into another century, traveling in space, as well, to the Europe of Louis XIV. The expansive, high-ceilinged rooms overwhelmed the eye with the rich somber colors and the heavy forms of Baroque art and furniture. Shells, acanthus leaves, volutes, garlands, and scrolls-often gilded decorated the museum-quality antique Bombay chests, chairs, tables, massive mirrors, cabinets, and etageres..Celestina stared curiously at Tom Vanadium. She had witnessed the effect of vanishment, though she hadn't actually seen the coin disappear in midair. Yet she seemed to sense either that something more than sleight of hand had just transpired or that the trick had a meaning she'd missed.. "I haven't disturbed him," said the visitor, taking his cue from the doctor and keeping his voice low..Clenching his right hand around the quarter, waving left hand over right, he intoned, "Jingle-jangle, mingle-jingle." Opening his right hand, he revealed that the coin had vanished..Her metal hands were still crossed defensively over her breasts. The artist had welded large hexagonal nuts to her rake-tine fingers to suggest knuckles, and balanced on one nut was a fourth quarter..a scene out of a movie about Robin Hood: a battle with cudgels on a slippery log bridge over a river. "Yes. I ... I'm still soaked with sweat."..voice was flat, a drone; he had delivered not an emotional threat, but a quiet promise.. "Thanks, Sparky, but not tonight. I'm thinking of taking a look around downstairs if old Nine Toes isn't stuck at home tonight with a case of paralytic bladder."..Eventually she discovered within herself all the light that she needed to find her way through the crucial hours immediately ahead. At last she knew what she must do, but she was not certain that she possessed the fortitude to do it..The boy never mentioned what he'd done, and his mother ceased worrying about him falling out of bed.. "There's a fine George and Ira Gershwin song called 'Someone to Watch Over Me.' 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..A dry laugh escaped the detective, but it had none of the warmth of most people's laughter. "You're not bad, Enoch. You're just not as good as you think you are."..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!"..The door was falling shut. With no more sound than the day makes when it turns to night, the detective had gone..Losen, a sea-pirate who called himself King of the Inmost Sea, was then the chief warlord in the city and all the east and south of Havnor. Exacting tribute from that rich domain, he spent it to increase his

soldiery and the fleets he sent out to take slaves and plunder from other lands. As Otters uncle said, he kept the shipwrights busy. They were grateful to have work in a time when men seeking work found only beggary, and rats ran in the courts of Maharion. They did an honest job, Otter's father said, and what the work was used for was none of their concern..Without a word, Joshua Nunn and the paramedic retreated to the foyer. The parlor doors slid shut..Furthermore, fear of the unknown is a weakness also because it humbles us. Humility, Caesar Zedd declares, is strictly for losers. For the purpose of social and financial advancement, we must pretend to be humble-shuffle our feet and duck our heads and make self-deprecating remarks-because deceit is the currency of civilization. But if ever we wallow in genuine humility, we will be no different from the mass of humanity, which Zedd calls "a sentimental sludge in love with failure and the prospect of its own doom."..To celebrate, Junior went to a gallery and purchased the second piece of art in his collection. Not sculpture this time: a painting..He gently drew the covers over his wife's ruined body, to her thin shoulders, but arranged her right arm on top of the blankets. He straightened and smoothed the folded-back flap of the top sheet.. "Naomi--she popped out of my oven twenty years ago, not out of yours," Sheena continued in a fierce whisper. "If anyone's suffering here, it's me, not you. Who're you, anyway? Some guy who's been boinking her for a couple years, that's all you are. I'm her mother. You can never know my pain. And if you don't stand with this family to make these wankers pay up big-time, I'll personally cut your balls off while you're sleeping and feed them to my cat."..This is a tale of those times. Some of it is taken from the Book of the Dark, and some comes from Havnor, from the upland farms of Onn and the woodlands of Faliern. A story may be pieced together from such scraps and fragments, and though it will be an airy quilt, half made of hearsay and half of guesswork, yet it may be true enough. It's a tale of the Founding of Roke, and if the Masters of Roke say it didn't happen so, let them tell us how it happened otherwise. For a cloud hangs over the time when Roke first became the Isle of the Wise, and it may be that the wise men put it there..During the past week, Junior had undertaken quiet background research on the prestidigitator with a badge. The cop was unmarried. He lived alone, so this bold visit entailed no risk..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..Her voice grew thinner when she spoke to Angel, but in this new frailty, Barty heard such love that he shook at the power of it. "God's in you, Angel, so strong you shine, and nothing bad at all."..Agnes discovered that watching her child be totally consumed by a new enthusiasm was an unparalleled delight. Through Barty, she had a tantalizing sense of what her own childhood might have been like if her father had allowed her to have one, and at times, listening to the boy exclaim about the space-faring Stone family or about the mysteries of Mars, she discovered that at least some part of a child still lived within her, untouched by either cruelty or time..His attention, as morbid as a circling vulture, settled upon the pianist's right hand. The left was open, palm down. But the right was crumpled shut, palm up.. "Most tornadoes stay on the ground twenty miles or less," Edom explained, "but this one kept its funnel to the earth for two hundred nineteen miles! And it was one mile wide. Everything in its path--torn, smashed to bits. Houses, factories, churches, schools--all pulverized. Murphysboro, Illinois, was wiped off the map, erased, hundreds killed in that one town.".. "I'm not saying there's anything wrong with it, you understand," Neddy whispered with a sort of fierce conciliation, "but I'm not gay, and I'm not interested in teaching you the piano or anything else. Besides, after the stories Renee told about you, I can't imagine why you think any friend of his ... hers would get near you. You need help. Renee is what she is, but she's not a bad person, she's generous and she's sweet. She doesn't deserve to be beaten, abused, and ... and all those horrible things you did. Excuse me."..The water shut off, and Junior heard the ratcheting noise of a paper-towel dispenser..Like a disc fish with silvery scales, the coin lay in the cup of Junior's palm. Directly over his life line..This philosophy had worked for him previously, but forgetting the aftermath was more difficult when the aftermath was your own poor, torn, severed toe. Your own poor, torn, severed toe was infinitely more difficult to ignore than a busload of dead nuns..While Jacob ate, he browsed through a new coffee-table book on dam disasters. He talked more to himself than to Barty and Angel, as he spot-read the text and looked at pictures. "Oh, my," he would say in sonorous tones. Or sadly, sadly: "Oh, the horror of it." Or with indignation: "Criminal. Criminal that it was built so poorly." Sometimes he clucked his tongue in his cheek or sighed or groaned in commiseration..Far from idiotic, Junior's cause was his survival and salvation, and he committed himself to it with every fiber of his body, with all of his mind and heart..Edom marveled at Agnes's ability to rise above the past and to transcend so many years of torment. She was able to see the house as simple shelter, whereas to her brothers, it was--and always would be--the place in which their spirits had been shattered. Even living within sight of it would have been out of the question if they had been employed, with options..She lost track of him. Fear knocked, knocked, on the door of her heart, because she was sure that he had vanished the way ships supposedly disappeared in the Bermuda Triangle..If that was the bright side, however, it was a piss-poor bright side (no pun intended), because he was still stuck in this men's room with a corpse, and he couldn't stay here for the rest of his life, surviving on tap water and paper-towel sandwiches but he couldn't leave the body to be found, either, because the police would be all over the gallery before the reception ended, before he had a chance to follow Celestina home.. "Worlds," ventured Jacob, "in which that oil-tank truck never stopped on the railroad tracks in Bakersfield, back in '60. So the train never crashed into it and those seventeen people never died.".. "I'm afraid you're wrong." When Tom opened his left hand, the palm lay as bare as that of a blind beggar in a country of thieves. Meanwhile, his right hand had tightened into a fist again..Throughout Agnes's thirty-three years, strength had often been demanded of her, but never such strength as was required now to rein in her emotions and to be a rock for Barty. "Don't be scared, honey. I'm here." She took one of his small hands in both of

hers. "I'll be waiting. You'll never be without me." On January 2, 1968, four days before his birthday, Bartholomew Lampion gave up his eyes that he might live, and accepted a life of blindness with no hope of bathing in light again until, in his good time, he left this world for a better one. She was shaking and so afraid, not thinking clearly, and for a moment she didn't understand what he meant, what he wanted, and then she saw that the window on his side of the car was shattered, too, and that the door beyond him was badly torqued, twisted in its frame. Worse, the side of the Pontiac had burst inward when the pickup plowed into them. With a steel snarl and sheet-metal teeth, it had bitten into Joey, bitten deep, a mechanical shark swimming out of the wet day, shattering ribs, seeking his warm heart. Later, weak and shaken, as he was packing his suitcase, the urge overcame him again. He was astonished to discover that anything could be left in his intestinal tract. 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. Koko skidded to a halt, perplexed, looked left, looked right, floppy ears lifted slightly to catch any sound of Mistress Mary. Junior released Neddy and, letting him slide down the wall to the floor, returned to the door to lock it. Reaching for the latch, he suddenly expected the door to fly open, revealing Thomas Vanadium, dead and risen. The ghost didn't appear, but Junior was shaken by the mere thought of such a supernatural confrontation in the middle of this crisis. Junior didn't believe in gods, devils, Heaven, Hell, life after death. He put his faith in one thing: himself. "It's all the same. Cars, trains, ships, all the same," Jacob insisted. "You remember the Toya Maru? Japanese ferry capsized back in September '54. Eleven hundred sixty-eight people dead. Or worse, in '48, off Manchuria, God almighty, the boiler exploded on a Chinese merchant ship, six thousand died. Six thousand on a single ship!" Two teenage boys and one elderly woman scrambled across the sidewalk, grabbing at the ringing rain of quarters. They caught some, but others bounced and twirled through their grasping fingers, rolling-spinning away into the gutter. Because the glass wings of the open window didn't lie flat against the exterior wall, they blocked his view. He had to thrust himself farther through the opening, until he seasawed on the sill, before he could see the length of the entire block, in which the gallery stood at approximately the middle. "There's no clear evidence of birth defects, but a couple tests reveal some worrisome anomalies. We'll know when we see the child." Her voice as bright as her bed ensemble, spiritual sister to baby chicks everywhere, yellow Angel raised her head from the pillow and said, "Will you have a wedding?" Worrying is what mothers do best. Celestina was her mother, as far as Angel was concerned, and the child was not yet of an age to be told, and to understand, that she had been blessed with two mothers: the one who gave birth to her, and the one who raised her. Fortunately, just as he was about to declare his gut feelings to his superior and risk dismissal, he saw his potential patient. At fifteen, Seraphim was breathtakingly beautiful, in her own way as striking as Naomi, and instinct told Junior that the chance of being physically or morally polluted by her was negligible.

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