

## A PERFECT DAY FOR SEMAPHORE

Overlaying the birthmark were brighter stains. The plain face, less homely now, was less flat, too, pocked and torn into a new and horrendous geography. In agreement, Maria pushed the stack of unused cards aside, and she peered at her hands as if she wanted to scrub them for a long time under hot water. 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. Barty grinned mischievously. "One of the places we visited today. Some big kids. They saw this scary movie, said they had to wash their shorts after." Barty whispered: "The North Pole Society of Not Evil Adventurers is now in session." Friday, after dinner, when he'd heard enough of Maria's method of fortune-telling to know that four decks were required, that only every third draw was read, and that aces-especially red aces-were the most propitious cards to receive, Jacob had taken great pleasure in preparing for Barty the most favorable first eight cards that could possibly be dealt. This was a small gift to cheer Agnes, on whose heart Joey's death weighed as heavily as iron chains. The possibility that he'd left a clear fingerprint on the watch crystal had to be judged remote. And the band had been too textured to take a print useful to the police. even allow himself as much as a lascivious wink or a quick caress of Victoria's hand. Cypresses lined the entry drive to the cemetery. Tall and solemn, the trees kept guard, as though posted to prevent restless spirits from roaming out into the land of the living. "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." Then Junior saw the blood on the right cuff of Vanadium's shirt. Blood dripping from his hand, too. On the drive home, Junior dropped the knife down a storm drain in Larkspur. He tossed the gloves in a Dumpster in Corte Madera. Gorging on fudge cake and coffee to guard against a spontaneous lapse into meditative catatonia, Junior manfully admitted that he had been weak, that he had reacted to the unknown with fear and retreat instead of with bold confrontation. Because each of us can trust no one in this world but himself, self-deceit is dangerous. He liked himself better for this frank admission of weakness. 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." Reverend White's polished, somewhat theatrical, yet sincere voice rose out of the past to issue this threat in Junior's memory as he had issued it that night, from a tape recorder, while Junior had been dancing a sweaty horizontal boogie with Seraphim in her parsonage bedroom. One problem: Nolly Wulfstan, Quasimodo without a hump, probably repaired to this convenient club after work, to down a few beers, because this was surely as close as he would ever get to a halfway attractive woman. The detective would think that he and Junior were here for the same reason-to gawk at nearly naked babes and store up enough images of bobbling breasts to get through the night-and he would not be able to comprehend that for Junior the attraction was the dance, the intellectual thrill of experiencing a new cultural phenomenon. He visited the bank in which he maintained a safe-deposit box under the John Pinchbeck identity. He withdrew the twenty thousand in cash and retrieved all the forged documents from the box. They came to the house in Boatwright Street after dark. They kicked the door in, and Hound, standing among the armed and armored men, said, "Him. Let the others be." And to Otter he said, "Don't move," in a low, amicable voice. He sensed great power in the young man, enough that he was a little afraid of him. But Otter's distress was too great and his training too slight for him to think of using magic to free himself or stop the men's brutality. He flung himself at them and fought them like an animal till they knocked him on the head. They broke Otter's father's jaw and beat his aunt and mother senseless to teach them not to bring up crafty men. Then they carried Otter away. Impressed by the sureness and swiftness with which the blind boy negotiated the steps and set off across the lawn, Tom didn't initially notice anything unusual about his stroll through the deluge. When Victoria finally calmed her racing heart, she returned the spoon to the tray on the nightstand, stoppered the carafe, and said, "That's enough for now, Mr. Cain. In your condition, even too much I melted ice might trigger renewed vomiting." At 11:45, on her way to bed, Agnes stopped at Barty's room and found him propped against pillows. The book was not particularly large as books went, but it was big in proportion to the boy; unable to hold it open with his hands alone, he rested his entire left arm across the top of the volume. The odds against this phenomenal eleven-card draw must be millions to one, which seemed to give the predictions validity. Celestina stared out for a moment, and then turned her head to look at Tom, with both the shade of the night and the sparkle of the metropolis still captured in her eyes. "What was that all about?" He knew that he needed to get a grip on himself. But he could not keep his breathing slow and deep, couldn't remember any of Zedd's other foolproof methods of self-control, couldn't recall a single useful meditative technique. The guest room. Bring Grace to the window. Disengage the latch. No good. Warped or painted shut. Small panes, sturdy mullions too difficult to break out. No turning back. In the fuming blackness, they would become disoriented in seconds, fall, and suffocate as surely as they would burn. Besides, the open window, providing draft, would draw the fire rapidly down the hallway at their backs. Into the autumn of 1967, Junior reviewed hundreds of thousands of phone listings, and occasionally he located a rare Bartholomew. In San Rafael or Marinwood. In Greenbrae or San Anselmo. Located and investigated and cleared them of any connection with Seraphim White's bastard baby. "And you're saying fear can fill his emptiness as well as sex or booze?" Kathleen wondered. "She's got preeclampsia. It's a condition that occurs in about five percent of pregnancies, virtually always after the twenty-fourth week, and usually it can be treated successfully. But I'm not going to sugarcoat this, Celestina. In her case, it's more serious. She hasn't been seeing a doctor, no prenatal care, and here she is in the middle of her thirtyeighth week, about ten days from delivery." When she still didn't meet his stare, he seized her by the chin and tipped her head back. When

Agnes woke at 1:50 A.M., she was in the grip of a vague apprehension for which she couldn't identify a source..He couldn't much longer take advantage of Paul Damascus's hospitality. Since bringing Wally to town, Tom had been staying in Paul's guest bedroom. He knew that he was welcome indefinitely, and the sense of family that he'd found with these people had only grown since January, but he nevertheless felt that he was imposing..Although weak, he was no longer in danger of spewing bile and blood like a harpooned whale. The siege had passed.. "They've gone to bed. They're tired," Wally told her as he put the car in gear and released the hand brake. "Aren't you?"..After the song concluded, Junior felt better. His heartbeat soon returned to normal. The damp palms of his hands grew dry..Hard experience had taught him, however, that killing someone he knew, while occasionally necessary, didn't release stress. Or if it did briefly release stress, then unforeseen consequences always contributed to even worse future stress..In the noble ruin of his face, Thomas Vanadium's smoke-gray eyes were striking, filled with a beautiful ... sorrow. Not self-pity. He clearly didn't regard himself as a victim. This, Kathleen felt, was the sorrow of a man who had seen too much of the suffering of others, who knew the evil ways of the world. These were eyes that read you at a glance, that shone with compassion if you deserved it, and that glared with a terrifying judgment if compassion wasn't warranted..DOWN SHE WENT, abruptly and hard, with a clatter and thud, her natural grace deserting her in the fall, though she regained it in her posture of collapse..During Junior's brief stroll, the sidewalk ended, giving way to the graveled shoulder of the road. He saw no one on foot, and no vehicles passed him..Less cautious than the typical accountant, perhaps mellow in this season of peace, Prosser opened the door without hesitation..When the long table was laden and the wine poured, when everyone but Mary settled into chairs, Angel said, "My daughter tells me she wants to make a short presentation before I say grace. I don't know what it is, but she assures me it doesn't involve singing, dancing, or reading any of her poetry." I..He might have felt properly foolish if he had not suffered so much personal experience of Enoch Cain. This was a false alarm, but considering the nature of the enemy, it wasn't a bad idea to put himself through a drill from time to time..In his mind's eye, Junior saw the coin in transit of the blunt fingers, moving more swiftly than previously because its passage was lubricated by blood..This didn't work for Junior. Strangely, when he focused on a mental image of any fruit-apple, peach, banana-his thoughts drifted to sex. He became aroused and had no hope of clearing his mind..Celestina threw down the weapon even before she turned, and as two cops entered the room, she cried, "He's getting away!"..Neither Agnes nor Edom knew of Jacob's great skill with cards. He had been discreet about his apprenticeship with Obadiah, and for almost twenty years, he'd resisted the urge to dazzle his siblings with his expertise..Junior vigorously scrubbed his corpse-licked cheek with one hand. Then he scrubbed his hand against the musician's raincoat..More good American music. The Supremes were Negroes, sure, but Junior was not a bigot. Indeed, he had once made passionate love to a Negro girl..By the time the family was ushered out, protesting, at the end of evening visiting hours, Junior hadn't succumbed to their pressure. If his conversion was to appear convincingly reluctant, he would have to resist them for at least another few days..Bressler but no Vanadium. A girl named Angel. Something was wrong here. Something was rotten..The man's voice echoed hollowly in Junior's ears, as if coming from the far end of a tunnel. Or from the terminus of a death-row hallway, on the long walk between the last meal and the execution chamber..Paul was nearest to that corner when he halted Grace in her rush toward certain death. Before he quite realized what he was doing, he found that he'd flung open the door and climbed half the single long flight of steps, as surefooted as Doc Savage or the Saint, or the Whistler, or any of the other pulp-fiction heroes whose exploits had for so long been his adventures by proxy..As luck would have it," the nun said, "Dr. Lipscomb was in the when it happened. He'd just delivered another baby under..Sitting at the desk, Celestina phoned her parents again. She shook uncontrollably, but her voice was steady..In the distance, the clang of a trolley-car bell. Hard and clear in spite of the muffling fog..Instead, he imagined Vanadium's blunt fingers moving over the intravenous apparatus with surprising delicacy, reading the function of the equipment as a blind man would read Braille with swift, sure, gliding fingertips. He imagined the detective finding the injection port in the main drip line, pinching it between thumb and forefinger. Saw him produce a hypodermic needle as a magician would pluck a silk scarf from the ether. Nothing in the syringe except deadly air. The needle sliding into the port ....The sleeves of the pajama top were pushed up, revealing more of the disease's vicious work. The muscles of her useless left arm had atrophied; the once graceful hand curled in upon itself, as though holding an invisible object, perhaps the hope she never abandoned..In the hall that served the two ground-floor apartments, they encountered Rena Moller, the elderly woman who lived in the unit across from theirs. She was polishing the dark wood of her front door with lemon oil, a sure sign that her son and his family were coming to dinner..The reception still roared in both showrooms of the gallery. Legions of the uncultured, taste-challenged in every regard except in their appreciation for hors d'oeuvres, yammered about art and chased their cloddish opinions with mediocre champagne..The guy was carrying a purse, whatever that meant, and when he walked through the door, he had a goofy look on his face, but his expression changed when he saw Junior..Ichabod passed Bartholomew through the open door to Celestina in the passenger's seat, went around the Buick, put the tote bag in the back, and climbed behind the wheel once more..Agnes found herself drifting up. A frightening sense of weightlessness overcame her..The five tales in this book explore or extend the world established by the first four Earthsea novels. Each is a story in its own right, but they will profit by being read after, not before, the novels..Already, he was up two hours past his bedtime. In recent months, he'd exhibited the more erratic sleeping habits of older children. Some nights, he seemed to possess the circadian rhythms of owls and bats; after being sluggish all day, he suddenly became alert and energetic at dusk wanting to read long past midnight..The paramedic put aside the needle, having used it, and grabbed the paddles of a..With the second shot, the dead woman tumbled out of her chair, and the chair clattered onto its side.. "By law, adoption records are sealed and so closely guarded that you'd have an easier time acquiring

a complete roster of the CIA's deep cover agents worldwide than finding this one baby." In the sermon that brought him a moment of fame that he'd found more uncomfortable than not, Daddy had used the life of Bartholomew to illustrate his point that every day in every life is of the most profound importance. Bartholomew is arguably the most obscure of the twelve disciples. Some would say Lebbaeus is less known, some might even point to Thomas the doubter. But Bartholomew certainly casts a shadow far shorter than those of Peter, Matthew, James, John, and Philip. Daddy's purpose in proclaiming Bartholomew the most obscure of the twelve was then to imagine in vivid detail how that apostle's actions, seemingly of little consequence at the time, had resonated down through history, through hundreds of millions of lives-and then to assert that the life of each chambermaid listening to this sermon, the life of each car mechanic, each teacher, each truck driver, each waitress, each doctor, each janitor, was as important as the resonant life of Bartholomew, although each dwelt beyond the lamp of fame and labored without the applause of multitudes.. "You're better at concentrative meditation without seed than anyone I've ever known, better than me. That's why you, especially, should never undertake a long session unsupervised," Chicane scolded. "At the very least, the very least, you should use your electronic meditation timer. I don't see it here, do I?" Aware of the mortician's new edginess, Jacob was convinced that his initial distrust of Panglo was justified. This twitchy little guy seemed to have something to hide. Jacob didn't have to be a cop to recognize nervousness born of guilt.. "Then you only have to wait eighteen years," he said, opening the apartment door and stepping aside once more, allowing Celestina to precede him.. Then he looked up at the massive limbs overhead, and the mood changed: A sense of impending insight at once gave way to the fear that an unsuspected fissure in a huge limb might crack through at this precise moment, crushing him under a ton of wood, or that the Big One, striking now, would topple the entire oak.. Phimie must be honored now with laughter instead of with tears, because her life had left Celestina with so many memories of joy and with joy personified in Angel. To fend off tears, she said, "Listen, Clark Kent, we women need our little secrets, our private thoughts. If you can really read my heart this easily, I guess I'm going to have to start wearing lead brassieres." This was a good night for television. To Tell the Truth at seven-thirty, followed by I've Got a Secret, The Lucy Show, and The Andy Griffith Show. The new Lucy wasn't quite as good as the old show; Paul and Perri missed Desi Arnaz and William Frawley.. of drool. Her eyes rolled, wild with fear, and seemed not to be focused on anything. Too late, Paul thought of the one more thing he had wanted to say. Too late, he said it anyway, "God bless you." "We've mapped three routes to the top," Angel said, "and each offers different challenges. Barty's eventually going to climb all of them, but he's starting with the hardest." Back in January, when he received the disappointing report from Nolly Wulfstan, Junior was not convinced that the private detective had exercised due diligence in his investigation. He suspected that Wulfstan's ugliness was matched by his laziness.. The stumpy ghost departed the sliding stairs at the second floor and walked off into women's sportswear.. He found it difficult to make a painful personal revelation sound sincere when delivered in a shout, but he managed well enough to bring a shine of tears to her eyes: "Part of my left foot was shot off in this upcountry sweep we did." exercise. Although they expected him to be dizzy, he had no difficulty whatsoever with his balance, and in spite of feeling a little drained, he wasn't as weak as they thought he was. He could have toured the hospital unassisted, but he played to their expectations and used the wheeled walker.. If the detective believed that Seraphim had been raped, his natural desire to exact vengeance for his friend's daughter might motivate him to commit the relentless harassment that Junior had endured now for four days.. Turning in circles, he tipped his head back, presenting his face to the streaming sky, laughing.. Although a believer, Agnes was not at the moment able to spread the flowers and ferns of faith over the hard, ugly reality of death. Cowled and skeletal, Death was here, all right, scattering his seeds among all her gathered friends, one day to reap them.. His daughter, his affliction, his millstone, granddaughter of the boil-giving voodoo Baptist .... Barty's release from Hoag Presbyterian had been delayed by an infection, and thereafter he had spent three days in a Newport-area rehabilitation hospital. Rehab consisted largely of orientation to his new dark world, since his lost function could not be recovered by either diligent exercise or therapy.. 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.. At Thanksgiving dinner, again at the three tables set end to end, in the year of the triple zero, Mary Lampion, now fourteen years old, made an interesting announcement over the pumpkin pie. In her travels where none but she could go, after seven fascinating years of exploring a fraction of all the infinite worlds, she said she sensed beyond doubt that, as Barty's mother had told him on her deathbed, there is one special place beyond all the ways things are, one shining place.. When she tried to speak to him, she could no more easily raise her voice than she could extend a hand to him.. With only a faint twinge of sentimental longing, he drove away from the house that had been his and Naomi's love nest for fourteen blissful months.. Oregon State Police might find at least one reason to be suspicious of the tragic scenario that he was creating. He didn't know much about the technology that police might employ at a crime scene, and he knew even less about forensic pathology. He was just doing the best job he could.. Otter stated it as an unfortunate fact, not as a moral assertion. Hound looked at him with appreciation. Living with the pirate king, he was sick of boasts and threats, of boosters and threateners.. Studying the brochure, Junior felt that the best response to this artist's work was to go directly into the bathroom, stick one finger down his throat, and purge himself. Considering his medical history, however, he couldn't afford to be such an expressive critic.. Joey rested not under the stern watch of the cypresses, but near a California pepper tree. With its graceful, cascading boughs, it appeared to stand in meditation or in prayer.. "Maybe it's not where the heart is," Wally corrected himself. "Maybe it's where the buffalo roam." 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 fire department. The firemen could come without sirens, quietly with their ladders, so as not to break Barty's concentration. He wanted Celestina to sit in her seat and use her lap belt, but she insisted on cuddling next to him, as if she were a high-school girl and he were her teenage beau. She always had a generous heart. After disease whittled Perri's flesh, leaving her so frail, her great heart, undiminished by her suffering, seemed bigger than the body that contained it. So quick, this violence, over even as it began. Because he had no interest in aftermath, however, Junior suffered no disappointment at the briefness of the thrill. The past was past, and as he closed the front door and stepped around the body, he focused on the future. Everyone confronted Agnes with expressions of puzzlement and expectation, and she looked from one to another. Paul. Maria. Francesca. Bonita. Grace. Edom. Jacob. Finally Celestina. "It's not scary," said Mary. "I just step into another place for a little, and then back. It's just like going from one room to the next. I can't get stuck over there or anything." She looked at Barty. "You know how it is, Dad." the beast would find them one day, but she hadn't spoken of that possibility in perhaps two and a half years. A cold wetness just above the crook of his left elbow. A sting. A tourniquet of flexible rubber tubing had been tied around his left arm, to make a vein swell more visibly, and the sting had been the prick of a hypodermic needle. Junior had thought the news was the lab report, which had found no ipecac in his spew. All that had been distraction. Then the hero got in the sedan with his friends, and they drove away into the sun-splashed morning. "There's a fine George and Ira Gershwin song called 'Someone to Watch Over Me.' 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." The rain was colder than it had been earlier, almost as icy as sleet. Or perhaps she was far hotter than before and felt the chill more keenly on her fevered skin. Each droplet seemed to hiss against her face, to sizzle against her hands, with which she tightly gripped her swollen abdomen as if she could deny Death the baby that it had come to collect. No one could put him in prison because of his dreams. "I can't remember. Those are the worst, when you're not able to remember them-don't you think? They're always so silly when you can recall the details. When you draw a blank ... they seem more threatening." 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. Thanksgiving dinner was a fine affair, and Christmas was even better. On New Year's Eve, Wally downed one drink too many and more than once offered to perform surgery on any member of the family, free of charge "right here, right now," as long as the procedure was within his area of expertise. madness or a brilliant deductive insight: Naomi, the hateful bitch, she poisoned me! "After the quake," Edom said, "forty thousand people took refuge in a two-hundred-acre open area, a military depot. A quake-related fire swept through so fast they were killed standing up, so tightly packed together they died as a solid mass of bodies." 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. Of course, he had the Pinchbeck and Gammoner identities waiting, two escape hatches. But he didn't want to use them. He liked his life on Russian Hill, and he was loath to leave it. Piano music drifted into the restaurant from the adjacent bar, so soft and yet sprightly that it made the clink of silverware seem like music, too. If she'd connected with his left side, as she intended, she might have broken his arm or cracked a few ribs. But he saw the chair coming, and as agile as a base runner dodging a shortstop's tag, he turned away from her, taking the blow across his back. Whereas Paul had been confounded in his desire to express his admiration for Salk, he was able to speak about Perri at length and with ease. Her wit, her heart, her wisdom, her kindness, her beauty, her goodness, her courage were the threads in a narrative tapestry that Pad could have continued weaving for all the rest of his days. Since her death, he hadn't been able to talk about her with anyone he knew, because his friends tended to focus on him, on his suffering, when he wanted them only to understand Perri better, to realize what an exceptional person she had been. He wanted her to be remembered, after he was gone, wanted her grace and her fortitude to be recalled and respected. She was too fine a woman to leave without a ripple in her wake, and the thought that her memory might pass away with Paul himself was anguishing. But, ah, the heft of the candlestick, the smooth arc it made, and the crack of contact had been as hugely satisfying as any home-run swing that had ever won a baseball World Series. Trying to ignore his phantom toe, which itched furiously, he searched the apartment. He proceeded carefully, determined not to shoot himself in the foot accidentally this time. By mid-March, he had exhausted the possibilities of Bartholomew as a surname. By the time that he shot himself in September, he had combed through the first quarter million listings in the directory in search of those whose first names were Bartholomew. 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. "You better wise up, you tree-humping nitwit," Rudy advised Junior, grabbing the bed railing as if he might tear it off and use it to club his son-in-law senseless. force open Edom's mouth. "Eat your sin, boy, eat your sin!" Edom resists eating his sin, but he's afraid for his eyes. From the public hallway on the ground level, stairs led to the upper

three floors. He would be able to hear anyone descending long before they arrived..Wishing he had left the gauze wrappings on his face, but afraid that the airwaves might already be carrying news of the bandaged man who had killed a minister in Spruce Hills, Junior abandoned the Dodge and hurriedly walked back to the private-service terminal, where the pilot from Sacramento waited. At the sight of his passenger, the pilot blanched and said, Allergic reaction to WHAT? And Junior said, Camellias, because Sacramento was the Camellia Capital of the World, and all that he wanted was to get back there, where he'd left his new Ford van and his Sklents and his Zedd collection and everything he needed to live in the future. The pilot couldn't conceal his intense revulsion, and Junior knew that he would have been stranded if he hadn't paid the round-trip charter fare in advance..Victoria lay faceup on the floor. The nurse was no longer as lovely as she had been, and perhaps because of early rigor mortis, her grace, which had initially been evident even in death, had now deserted her..The doors slid open, and they rolled Barty corridor to corridor, past the scrub sinks, to a waiting surgical nurse in green cap, mask, and gown. She alone effected his transfer into the positive pressure of the surgery..Junior assumed the dead girl had come from a family of stature in the Negro community, which would explain the stonemason's accelerated service. Vanadium, according to his own words, was a friend of the family; consequently, the father was most likely a police officer..For the past two days, Junior had eaten only binding foods, and late this afternoon, he had taken a preventive dose of paregoric, as well..After too many years investigating homicides, after too much experience of human evil, perhaps he had grown both misanthropic and paranoid..In spite of his dumpy appearance-and especially in the dark, where appearances didn't count-Vanadium had the aura of a mystic. Although Junior didn't believe in mystics or in the various unearthly powers they claimed to possess, he knew that mystics who believed in themselves were exceptionally dangerous people..The full nature of the nightmare continued to elude him, but he became convinced that good reason for his fear existed, that the dream had been more than a dream. He had a nemesis named Bartholomew not merely in dreams, but in the real world, and this Bartholomew had something to do with ... babies..Looking up at the mirror above the sink, he saw reflected not the self-improved and fully realized man that he'd worked so hard to become, but the pale, round-eyed little boy who had hidden from his mother when she had been in the deepest and darkest end of one of her cocaine-assisted, amphetamine-spiced mood swings, before she traded cold reality for the warm coziness of the asylum. As if some whirlpool of time was spinning him backward into the hateful past, Junior felt his hard-won defenses being stripped away.. "Sitters. Friends, relatives of friends. People I can trust. I can afford sitters if I'm getting only dinner tips." "Supposing he's senile, wouldn't he possibly think you were his long- lost brother or someone?" "Well, he was an insurance agent, and numbers are important in that line of work. And he was a good investor, too. Not the whiz you are with numbers, but I'm sure you got some of your talent from him..The paramedic, fingers pressed to the radial artery in Junior's right wrist, must have felt a rocket-quick acceleration in his pulse rate..His request felt like an assault. Agnes almost rocked backward as though struck..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..use it. The cop was no threat to the English army, as Joan had been, but as far as Junior was concerned, the creep most definitely deserved to be burned at the stake..To look entirely like her name, she needed only white wings. He would give her wings: a short flight out the window, into the oak.. "If there's a presentation, I assume then I'm the presentee," he said, taming his chair sideways to the table and taking her into his lap. "Just remember, I never wear neckties." The room was bright enough for him to confirm that he was alone. The interior of the box in which Naomi now resided could be no more silent than this house.

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