

BEARD IN MIND

Too rattled to want lunch at the St. Francis Hotel or anywhere else, Junior returned to his apartment. Kathleen and Nolly shifted their attention to Tom's clenched left hand, although the quarter could not possibly have traveled from one fist to the other. "Will I love you tomorrow, you mean, and the day after tomorrow, and on forever? Of course, forever, Wally, always." He hadn't the slightest doubt that eventually he could romance Renee into marriage, regardless of her wealth and sophistication. He could shape women to his desire as easily as Sklent could paint his brilliant visions on canvas, easier than Wroth Griskin could cast bronze into disturbing works of art. Beyond the window, behind veils of rain and fog, the metropolis appeared to be more enigmatic than Stonehenge, as unknowable as any city in our dreams. In the name of Zedd, slow deep breaths. Focus not on the past, not on the present, but only on the future. What has happened is of no importance. All that matters is what will happen next. "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." All right, Celestina said, "yes, of course." She could see no harm in humoring Phimie. "Angel. Angel White. Now, you calm down, you relax, don't stress yourself." Barty looked at Angel, and Angel looked at Barty, and they dropped to their knees on the grass before their daughter. They were both grinning ... and then their grins stiffened a little. Bob gently encouraged him to return by degrees from the deep meditative state, return, return, return..... "Seems like," Vanadium agreed. "So a man like Cain obsesses on one thing after another-sex, money, food, power, drugs, alcohol, anything that seems to give meaning to his days, but that requires no real self-discovery or self-sacrifice. Briefly, he feels complete. However, there's no substance to what he's filled himself with, so it soon evaporates, and then he's empty again." "It was in your heart, too, and anything that's in your heart is there for anyone to see. Will your father marry us?" Leaning across the front seat, he lowered the passenger's window six inches. Then he lowered the driver's-side window an equal distance. The gas oven might blow up in his face, at last bringing him peace, but if it didn't, he would at least have cookies for Agnes. She bent down and kissed his cheek, his right eye, his left, his brow, his dry cracked lips. "I love you so much. I wanted to die when I thought you weren't with me anymore." Stop it, stop it! " Agnes, only ten years old, slender and shaking, but wild with righteousness, until now held in thrall by her own fear, by the memory of all the beatings that she herself has taken. She screams at their father and strikes him with a book she's brought from the house. The Bible. She strikes their father with the Bible, from which he's read to them every night of their lives. He drops the roses, tears the holy book out of Agnes's hands, and pitches it across the yard. He rakes up a handful of the scattered roses, intending to make his son resume this dinner of sin, but here comes Agnes once more, the Bible recovered, brandishing it at him, and now she says what all of them know to be true but what none of them has ever dared say, what even Agnes herself will never again dare to say after this day, not while the old man lives, but she dares to say it now, holding the Bible toward him, so he can see the gold-embossed cross upon the imitation-leather cover. "Murderer," Agnes says. "Murderer " And Edom knows that they're all as good as dead now, that their father will slaughter them right here, right this minute, in his rage. "Murderer," she says accusingly, behind the shield of the Bible, and she doesn't mean that he is killing Edom, but that he killed their mother, that they heard him in the night, three years before, heard the short but awful struggle, and know that what happened was no accident. Roses fall from his skinned and pierced hands, a flurry of petals yellow and petals red. He rises and takes a step toward Agnes, his dripping fists crimson with his blood and with Edom's. Agnes doesn't back away, but thrusts the book toward him, and scintillant sunlight caresses the cross. Instead of tearing the book out of her hands again, their father stalks away, into the house, surely to return with club or cleaver ... yet they will see no more of him this day. Then Agnes-with tweezers for the thorns, with a basin full of warm water and a washcloth, with iodine and Neosporin and bandages-kneels beside him in the yard. Jacob, too, comes forth from the dark crawlspace under the porch, having watched in terror from behind the latticework skirt. He is shaking, crying, flushed with embarrassment because he didn't intervene, although he was wise to hide, for the disciplinary beating of one twin usually leads to the pointless beating of the other. Agnes gradually settles Jacob by involving him in the treatment of his brother's wounds, and to Edom she says, often thereafter, "I love your roses, Edom. I love your roses. God loves your roses, Edom." Overhead, agitated wings quiet to a soft flutter, and the shrieking crows grow silent. The air pools as still and heavy as the water in a hidden lagoon within a secret glade, in the perfect garden of the unfallen.....He turned from the cowering girl and studied the boy, who stood a few steps inside the room, holding a can of soda in each hand. The artificial eyes were convincing, but they didn't possess the knowing look that so troubled him in the strange girl. Even Barty seemed to be attentive, but Angel happily applied crayons to a coloring book and hummed softly to herself. "Well, we have earthquakes here," Jolene said, "but back east they have all those hurricanes." He squirmed deep under the covers, clamped a plump pillow over his head to muffle the singing, and chanted, "Find the father, kill the son," until at last he fell exhausted into sleep. Convinced that the house was playing tricks on him, Barty went downstairs, step by measured step, to the foyer and the ground-floor hall. Shadows still perched throughout most of the room. They no longer reminded her of roosting birds, but of a featherless flock, leathery of wing and red of eye, with a taste for unspeakable feasts. Still pretending sleep, Junior delighted in the realization that the detective himself had dragged a red herring across the trail and was now busily following this distracting scent. "I'm sure you would be, yes, but I'm afraid I don't have the patience to teach, I'm a performer, not an instructor. I suppose I could give you the name of a good teacher." In reality, it had been a homely device, a mere box. In memory, it seemed ominous, charged with the evil portent of a nuclear bomb. The short walk across the room, to the hero's table, looked more daunting to Paul than the trek he'd just completed. He was nobody, a

small-town pharmacist who missed more work each month, who relied increasingly on his worried employees to cover for him, and who would lose his business if he didn't get a grip on himself. He had never done a great deed, never saved a life. He had no right to impose upon this man, and now he knew he hadn't the nerve to do so, either..She wanted so badly to believe, to see her son made whole again, and the funny thing was that she could believe, and without emotional risk, because it was true..Considering his battered and stitched face, considering also his tragic and colorful history, Vanadium spoke with remarkably little drama. His voice was calm, nearly flat, rising and falling so little that he almost talked in a monotone..The next thing he knew, he was at the kitchen sink, turning off the water, which he couldn't remember having turned on. He appeared to have washed the bloody candlestick-it was clean-but he had no recollection of this bit of housekeeping..Junior blinked and dared not speak, because he didn't know any Bartholomew, and now he was certain the cop was weaving an elaborate web of deceit, setting a trap. Why would he have spoken a name that meant nothing to him?.When she tried to speak to him, she could no more easily raise her voice than she could extend a hand to him..From a distance and through a scattering of trees, Junior wasn't able to discern much about the other funeral, but he was pretty sure many if not most of that crowd were Negroes. He surmised, therefore, that the person being buried was a Negro, too..Indeed, subconsciously, she had known that Nella was gone since receiving the call at 4:15 this morning. When the old woman had finished what she needed to say, the silence on the line had been eerily perfect, without one crackle of static or electronic murmur, unlike anything Celestina had ever heard on a telephone before..Because she'd enjoyed some limited use of her right arm, it was less wasted than her left, although not normal. Paul pulled down that sleeve of her pajamas..The magazine covers were colorful, lurid, full of violence and eeriness and the coy sexual suggestiveness of a more innocent time. Most days, he read a story while eating the two pieces of fruit that were his lunch, but sometimes he lost himself in a particularly vivid illustration, daydreaming about far places and great adventures..For the first few bites of crab in a light cornmeal crust, Nolly suspended their conversation. Bliss..Never before had she put faith in any form of prognostication. In the whispery falling of those twelve cards, however, she heard the faint voice of truth, not quite a coherent truth, not as clear a message as she might have wished, but a murmur that she couldn't ignore.."After Elfarran and Morred perished and the Isle of Solea sank beneath the sea, the Council of the Wise governed for the child Serriadh until he took the throne. His reign was bright but brief. The kings who followed him in Enlad were seven, and their realm increased in peace and wealth. Then the dragons came to raid among the western lands, and wizards went out in vain against them. King Akambar moved the court from Berila in Enlad to the City of Havnor, whence he sent out his fleet against invaders from the Kargad Lands and drove them back into the East. But still they sent raiding ships even as far as the Inmost Sea. Of the fourteen Kings of Havnor the last was Maharion, who made peace both with the dragons and the Kargs, but at great cost. And after the Ring of the Runes was broken, and Erreth-Akbe died with the great dragon, and Maharion the Brave was killed by treachery, it seemed that no good thing happened in the Archipelago..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..Either operating on first-aid knowledge of his own or responding to an instruction from the medic, the cop slipped a foam pillow under Agnes's head.." -though this Tom now has a rhinoceros-smacked face, this other Tom, in his own world, has an ordinary face. Poor him, so ordinary.." Lipscomb said, "We're only two and a half blocks from the best Armenian restaurant in the city. I'll dash over there, bring back some chilled bubbly and an early dinner, if you'll allow me.." As though Amelia Earhart, the long-lost aviatrix, had reached out of her twilight zone and snared the two bits, no tumbling coin glinted in the air above the desk..Into new avenues of the labyrinth he moved, but then back again, back upon his own trail, twisting, turning, from the occult to modern literature, from history to popular science, and here the occult once more, always the shadow glimpsed so fleetingly and so peripherally that it might have been imagination, the scent of a woman no sooner detected than lost again in the perfumes of aging paper and bindery glue, twisting, turning, until abruptly he stopped, breathing hard, halted by the realization that he hadn't heard the singing in some time..Junior stalked her, but she eluded him. Always, the song seemed to arise from the next room, but when he passed through the doorway into that space, the voice then sounded as if it came from the room that he'd just left..Maria, after a single sip of Chardonnay, fled to the kitchen, ostensibly to check on the apricot flan that she'd brought, but in reality to press a cool and slightly damp dishtowel against her eyes.."No," said Vanadium, "you only think you know who I am and what I am, but you don't know anything. That's all right. You'll learn.." Evidently, the hero was accustomed to encounters of this nature. He rose, pulled out the unused fourth chair. "Please sit with us.." which was beginning to come into view, was as sharp as pins and needles, sheer torture to her eyes..From the devil to the sacred and then beyond, Junior drove north on State Highway 160, which was proudly marked as a scenic route, although in these predawn hours, all lay bleak and black. Following the serpentine course of the Sacramento River, Highway 160 wove past a handful of small, widely separated towns.."He knew how you felt about having too much life insurance. So he didn't disclose it to you.." For a long time, she stood beside the bed, holding his hand, confident that on some level he was aware of her presence, though he gave no indication whatsoever that he knew she was there..The Spruce Hills Police Department was far too small to have a full-blown Scientific Investigation Division. And if the tableau presented to them appeared convincing enough, they might accept the death as a freak accident and never turn to the state police for technical..Although a cold current crackled along the cable of her spine, Agnes smiled at the card. She was determined to change the dark mood that had descended over them.."No, I don't see it," Chicane repeated. "There's no benefit to a meditation marathon. Twenty minutes is enough, man. Half an hour at the most. You relied on your internal clock, didn't you?"..Junior wanted to kill her. Kill him. Whatever. But he sensed that Renee knew more than a little about dirty fighting and that the outcome of a

violent confrontation would not be easy to predict..In the cab, pulling into traffic, the driver said, "The mister tells me you're the star of the show tonight." "Thirsty," Agnes rasped. Her voice was Sahara sand abrading anienct stone, the dry whisper of a pharaoh's mummy talking to itself in a vaulted sealed for three thousand years..After the service, among those who came to Agnes at graveside, trying to express the inexpressible, was Paul Damascus, the owner of Damascus Pharmacy on Ocean Avenue. Of Mideastern extraction, he had dark olive skin and, incredibly, rust--red hair. With his rust-red eyebrows, lashes, and mustache, his handsome face looked like that of a bronze statue with a curious patina..He'd acted boldly, recklessly, without scoping the territory to be sure Prosser was alone. The accountant lived by himself, but a visitor might be present.."In addition to that policy," said Vinnie, "there's another. . .--he filled his lungs, hesitated, then exhaled the air and the sum with a tremor---'seven hundred fifty thousand. Three-quarters of a million dollars."..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"..Holding a shaker in each hand, Tom walked them forward, causing them to diverge slightly at first, but then moving them along exactly parallel to each other..At the midpoint of the table, directly under the chandelier, the flashing silvery disc turned through the air, turned, turned, turned out of this world into another.."No, I didn't see him," Junior reminded the attorney. "I just assumed, when this harassment started here-".Desperately trying to collect her wits, Agnes gazed out at the deluged graveyard, where the mournful trees and massed monuments were blurred by purling streams ceaselessly spilling down the windshield..Shortly past nine o'clock, an hour after Edom and Jacob had gone, Barty came downstairs, book in hand. "The twisties are back."..So they had cooked up this project, math and mayhem, geometry of limbs and branches, arboreal science and childish stunt, a test of strategy and strength and skill-and of the scary limits of nine-year-old bravado..At the bottom, the killer had pushed the cedar chest aside and clambered to his feet. From out of his raveled Tutankhamen windings, he peered up at Paul and fired one shot without taking aim, almost halfheartedly, before disappearing into the living room..Nevertheless, being cautious even as he seized the day--or the night, in this case--he parked a short distance from his destination, on a parallel street. He walked the last three blocks.."No member of the society ever violates a secret confidence," Agnes assured him..He told her that he loved her, and she slipped away upon his words. As she went, the haggard look of the terminal leukemic patient passed from her, and before the gray mask of death replaced it, he saw the beauty he had preserved in memory when he was three, before they took his eyes, saw it so briefly, as if something transforming welled out of her, a perfect light, her essence..Heinlein dreamed of traveling to far worlds. Prior to his death, John Kennedy had promised that men would walk on the moon before the end of the decade. Barty wanted nothing so grand, only to read a few stories, to lose himself in the wonderful private pleasure of books, because soon each story would be a listening experience only, no longer entirely a private journey..The blinds were raised, the windows bare. Usually, she liked the smoky, reddish-gold glow of the city at night, but this once it made her uneasy..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."..A nuclear-powered sound system blasted out the Doors, Jefferson Airplane, the Mamas and the Papas, Strawberry Alarm Clock, Country Joe and the Fish, the Lovin' Spoonful, Donovan (unfortunately), the Rolling Stones (annoyingly), and the Beatles (infuriatingly). Megatons of music crashed off the brick walls, made the many-paned metal framed windows reverberate like the drumheads in a hard-marching military band, and created simultaneously an exhilarating sense of possibility and a sense of doom, the feeling that Armageddon was coming soon but that it was going to be fun..Barefoot, in midnight-blue silk pajamas, he walked through his rooms turning on lights in a considered pattern, which he had settled upon after much thought and planning..That night, in Barty's room, after Agnes had listened to his prayers and then had tucked him in for the night, she sat on the edge of his bed. "Honey, I was wondering.... Now that you've had more time to think, could you explain to me what happened?"..Sheena Hackachak, at forty-four, was more beautiful than any current movie star. She looked twenty years younger than her true age, and she so resembled her late daughter that Junior felt a rush of erotic nostalgia at the sight of her..Tom between curiosity and emotional exhaustion, Celestina held his gaze, thinking, and finally she said, "Deal."..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..Opening the directory to the marker, he found a card tucked between the pages. A joker, with BARTHOLOMEW in red block letters.."He's an attorney, and this grieving husband comes to him with a big liability case. There's money to be made."..She was sopping, shivering. Water streamed from her soaked hair, down her face, as she wiped at her beaded eyelashes with one dripping hand..This wasn't the same Enoch Cain whom Vanadium had known three years ago in Spruce Hills. That man had been utterly ruthless but not a wild, raging animal, coldly determined but never obsessive. That Cain had been too calculating and too self-controlled to have been swept into the emotional frenzy required to produce this blood graffiti and to act out the symbolic mutilation of Bartholomew with a knife..Late Thursday, following a nine-hour session with Hisscus, Nork, and Knacker, Magusson--negotiating in conjunction with the Hackachak counsel--had indeed reached acceptable terms. Kaitlin Hackachak would receive \$250,000 for the loss of her sister. Sheena and Rudy would receive \$900,000 to compensate them for their severe emotional pain and suffering; this allowed them to undergo a lot of therapy in Las Vegas. Junior would receive \$4,250,000. Magusson's fee was twenty percent prior to trial--forty percent if a settlement had been reached after the start of court proceedings--which left Junior with \$3,400,000. All payments to plaintiffs were net of taxes..To the phone, the police. No dial tone. Pointless to

rattle the disconnect switch. The line had been cut. 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. "And maybe," said Agnes, caught up in the speculation, "when your life comes to an end in all those many branches, what you're finally judged on is the shape and the beauty of the tree." "I'm gonna dream about baby chickens," she told Celestina, "and if I'm all yellow, they'll think I'm one of them." Junior found the acclaim gratifying, but the widespread use of his photograph was a high price to pay even for the recognition of his contribution to art. Fortunately, with his bald head and pocked face, he no longer resembled the Enoch Cain for whom the authorities were searching. And they believed that the bandages on his face, at the church, had been merely an exotic disguise. One psychologist even speculated that the bandages had been an expression of the guilt and shame he felt on a subconscious level. Yeah, right. He wanted, all right, but intuition warned him that he ought to continue to be discreet for a while longer. As the bitch began her backswing, Junior grabbed the chair. He didn't try to tear it out of her hands, but used it to shove her as hard as he could. If Junior was patient, he could slip in there, find Bartholomew, kill the boy in bed, whack Ichabod second, and still have a chance to make love to Celestina. Barty approached stair climbing as a mathematical problem, calculating the precise movement of each leg and placement of each foot necessary to successfully negotiate the obstacle. He proceeded less slowly on the next three steps than he had on the first three, and thereafter he ascended with growing confidence, pumping his legs with machinelike precision. Before setting out from home, Joey had buckled his lap belt, but because of Agnes's condition, she hadn't engaged her own. She rammed against the door, pain shot through her right shoulder, and she thought, Oh, Lord, the baby! 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." And now Cain was aware of her, interested in her. Informed of this development, Harrison would no doubt rethink his position. When Agnes crunched the ice, the nurse said, "No, no. Don't swallow it all at once. Let it melt." Vanadium continued in his characteristic drone, a tone at odds with the colorful content of his speech: "A man takes one look at his wife's body, starts to sweat harder than a copulating hog, spews like a frat boy at the end of a long beer-chugging contest, and chucks till he chucks up blood—that's not the response of your average murderer." Cain turned the pistol on Barty, but when Tom charged, Cain swung toward him once more. The round that he fired would have been a crippler, maybe a killer, except that Angel launched herself off the window seat behind Cain and gave him a hard shove, spoiling his aim. The killer stumbled and then shimmered. As the heavysset nurse retreated with the baby, Phimie's grip on her sister's hand relaxed, but then grew firm once more as her gaze also became more intense. "Love ... you." He tucked his left arm tight against his side and threw himself against the door. The obstructing furniture was heavy, but it moved an inch. If it would give one inch, it would give two, so it wasn't immovable, and he was already as good as in there. Angel raised her attention from the salt shaker to Tom's face, studied his scars for a moment, and said, "No." Without using his flashlight, depending only on the moon, he ascended through the cemetery to the service road. In truth, he was terrified. Although his need for her company was so profound that it seemed to arise from his marrow, a part of him marveled—and trembled—at his dedicated pursuit of her. Maria set aside two cards before turning another faceup. This was also an ace of hearts. calm. He tried to imagine what Victoria's breasts would look like, freed from all restraint. He knew for a fact that Seraphim had died in childbirth. He had seen the gathering of Negroes at her funeral in the cemetery, the day of Naomi's burial. He had heard Max Bellini's message on the maniac cop's Ansaphone. Everyone from the pie caravan had gathered under the oak. The entire family, in its many names, adults and children, heads tipped back hands shielding their eyes from the late sun, watched Barty's progress in all but complete silence. Jolene started to refill his coffee mug—then thought better of it. "Maybe you don't need more caffeine, Edom." Indeed, Junior suspected that they might be here at Vanadium's urging. The cop would be interested in determining how avaricious the mourning husband would prove to be when presented with the opportunity to turn his wife's cold flesh into cash. "Oh, that's me, all right. I'm on the FBI's most-wanted list for criminal pie jostling." "It's just ... the last time I saw him, he trapped me in a corner and told this god awful story, far more than I wanted to know, about some British murderer back in the forties, this monstrous man who beat people to death with a hammer, drank their blood, then disposed of their bodies in a vat of acid in his workroom." He shuddered. "Oh, it certainly is! It certainly is enough! But ... I don't regret much, you know. But I do regret not being here to see why you and Angel have been brought together. I know it'll be something lovely, Barty. Something so fine." Otter said nothing. "Why do they let a man like that keep his badge?" Junior asked. "He's outrageous, wholly unprofessional." Their evenings together were comfortable bliss, though usually they just watched television, or he read to her. She enjoyed being read to: mostly historical novels and occasional mysteries. He found himself looking over his shoulder more than once. By the time he returned to his room, he felt half crushed by anxiety. The infant's smile was so captivating and his puzzlement so comically earnest that both expressions worked on Agnes's misery as surely as yeast leavens dough. Her bitter tears turned sweet. Agnes prepared a dinner to indulge him: hot dogs with cheese, potato chips. Root beer instead of milk. 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. If such a small quantity of crushed ice, taken in a single swallow, might cause. Urgency gripped the paramedics. The rescuers' equipment and the pieces of the car door were dragged out of the way to make a path for a gurney, its wheels clattering across pavement littered with debris. The night that followed might as well have been a night in Hell, though a hell in which Satan provided an electrolytically balanced beverage. Yet that evening, when she'd accepted his proposal and asked if he wasn't frightened,

he said, "Not anymore." AFTER UNDERGOING TESTS for brain tumors or lesions, to ascertain whether his seizure of violent emesis might, in fact, have a physical cause, Junior was returned to his hospital room shortly before noon. Frowning, Angel studied the tasty strip of meat pinched between her fingers, reevaluating everything she thought she knew about the source of bacon. "Did he say I'd met him?" Jacob asked, squinting past Edom toward the bright sunlight at the open door. "In a way, he does," Vanadium said. "When you're as hollow as Enoch Cain, the emptiness aches. He's desperate to fill it, but he doesn't have the patience or the commitment to fill it with anything worthwhile. Love, charity, faith, wisdom—those virtues and others are hard won, with commitment and patience, and we acquire them one spoonful at a time. Cain wants to be filled quickly. He wants the emptiness inside poured full, in quick great gushes, and right now." He was uncomfortable, achy, thirsty, but he remained utterly still and observant. After a while, he realized that the sense of oppression with which he'd awakened was not entirely a psychological symptom: Something heavy lay across his abdomen. And it was cold—so cold, in fact, that it had numbed his middle to the extent that he hadn't immediately felt the chill of it. Shivers coursed through him. He clenched his jaws to prevent his teeth from chattering and thereby alerting the man in the chair. Although he never took his eyes off the corner, Junior became preoccupied with trying to puzzle out what was draped across his midsection. The mysterious observer made him sufficiently nervous that he couldn't order his thoughts as well as usual, and the effort to prevent the shivers from shaking a sound out of him only further interfered with his ability to reason. The longer that he was unable to identify the frigid object, the more alarmed he became. He almost cried out when into his mind oozed an image of Naomi's dead body, now past the whitest shade of pale, as gray as the faint light at the window and turning pale green in a few places, and cold, all the heat of life gone from her flesh, which was not yet simmering with any of the heat of decomposition that would soon enliven it again. "The doctors," he continued, "needed to repair damage to the left frontal sinus, the sphenoidal sinus, and the sinus cavernous, which had all been partially crushed by that pewter candlestick. Frontal, malar, ethmoid, maxillary, sphenoid, and palatine bones had to be rebuilt to properly contain my right eye, because it sort of ... well, it dangled. That was just for starters, and there was considerable essential dental work, as well. I elected not to have any cosmetic surgery." So many stops, too little time at each, a dazzle of Christmas trees decorated every one to a different taste, offers of butter cookies and hot chocolate or lemon crisps and eggnog, morning chats in bright kitchens steeped in wonderful cooking odors and—in the chillier afternoon good wishes exchanged in front of hearth fires, gifts accepted as well as given, cookies taken in trade for pecan cakes, "Silver Bells" and "Hark How the Bells" and "Jingle-Bell Rock" on the radio: Therewith they arrived at three o'clock in the afternoon, Christmas Eve, their deliveries completed before Santa's had begun. "What room has Mrs. Lombardi been moved to?" she asked. "I'd like to ... to see her before I go." Moving out of the doorway, into the bedroom, he said, "What book would that be?" Perhaps this particular worry was not ordinary maternal concern. If a sixth sense is at work in all of us, then perhaps subconsciously Apes was aware of the tragedy to come: the tumors, the surgery, the blindness. Robert Heinlein saved her. Over hot dogs and chips, she read to Barty from *Red Planet*, beginning at the top of page 104. He had previously shared enough of the story with Agnes so that she felt connected to the narrative, and soon she was sufficiently involved with the tale that she was better able to conceal her anguish. 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. Now, after removing the four decks of cards from the pressboard packs in which they had come, Jacob lined them up side by side on the scarred maple top of the table. Edom felt uneasy in this kingdom of a strange god. The god that his brother feared was humanity, its dark compulsions, its arrogance. Edom, on the other hand, trembled before Nature, whose wrath was so great that one day she would destroy all things, when the universe collapsed into a super dense nugget of matter the size of a pea. The afternoon was winding down, and the lowering sky seemed to be drawn steadily toward the earth by threads of gray light that reeled westward, ever faster, over the horizon's spool. The air smelled like rain waiting to happen.

[Les Aventures Du Roi Pausole](#)

[The Great Events by Famous Historians Volume 13](#)

[LAiglon](#)

[Cloudy Jewel](#)

[Hidden Hand](#)

[Vie de Christophe Colomb](#)

[Finn the Wolfhound](#)

[Rudolph Von Habsburg Ein Heldengedicht in Zwolf Gesangen](#)

[Memoires Du Marechal Marmont Duc de Raguse \(3 9\)](#)

[First- Ninth Annual Report of the New York State Dairy Commissioner 1884-1891 92 Volume 4](#)

[Irving Vignettes Vignette Illustrations of the Writings of Washington Irving](#)

[Family Lectures on the Principles and Practice of the Christian Religion 2nd Ed Volume 2](#)

[Proceedings Volume 1](#)

[Modern Russia Comprising Russia Under Alexander II Russian Communism the Greek Orthodox Church the Baltic Provinces of Russia](#)

[Progress of Art in the Century](#)

[Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology Volume 12](#)

[The Christmas Books of Mr M A Titmarsh Mrs Perkins Ball Our Street Dr Birch and His Young Friends the Kickleburys on the Rhine the Rose and the Ring](#)

[The History of Great Britain From the First Invasion of It by the Romans Under Julius Caesar Volume 10](#)

[Notes on Central America Particularly the States of Honduras and San Salvador Their Geography Topography Climate Population Resources](#)

[Productions Etc Etc and the Proposed Honduras Inter-Oceanic Railway](#)

[Lives of the Engineers Volume 3](#)

[Sketches of the Rites and Customs of the Greco-Russian Church](#)

[A Key to the Bible Doctrine of Atonement and Justification Or a Plan to Harmonize the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament In Thirty](#)

[Sermons All of Which Originate from Gen II 17 and I Pet I 18 19 in Two Parts With an Appendix](#)

[Great Authors in Their Youth](#)

[Transactions of the Association of American Physicians Volume 36](#)

[English American Literature Studies in Literary Criticism Interpretation History Including Complete Masterpieces in 10 Vol Volume 9](#)

[Memoires Du Chevalier de Quincy Volume 3](#)

[The Development of Modern Philosophy With Other Lectures and Essays](#)

[Quarterly Report Volumes 1-16](#)

[Cases Argued and Adjudged in the Court of Kings Bench at Westminster In the 7th 8th 9th and 10th Years of the Reign of His Late Majesty King](#)

[George the Second \[1733-1738\] During Which Time the Late Lord Chief Justice Hardwicke Presided in That Cour](#)

[Night Morning](#)

[England Its People Polity and Pursuits Volume 1](#)

[The Ouananiche and Its Canadian Environment](#)

[The Design and Construction of Ships Volume 2](#)

[The History of Greece from Its Commencement to the Close of the Independence of the Greek Nation Volume 1](#)

[The Clinical Journal Volume 9](#)

[A Year in Spain Volume 1](#)

[The Life of John Knox Containing Illustrations of the History of the Reformation in Scotland](#)

[The Works of George Berkeley](#)

[The Chautauquan Volume 61](#)

[A System of Christian Doctrine Volume 2](#)

[The Western Architect Volumes 23-24](#)

[The American Quarterly Register Volume 4](#)

[The History and Antiquities of the Parish of Hemingsbrough in the County of York](#)

[The Central Law Journal Volume 37](#)

[The Poetical Works of Charles Churchill](#)

[The Monitor and the Navy Under Steam](#)

[The American Monthly Magazine and Critical Review Volume 1](#)

[The Political Constitutions of Great-Britain and Ireland Asserted and Vindicated The Connection and Common Interest of Both Kingdoms](#)

[Demonstrated And the Grievances Which Each Has Suffered Set Forth in Several Addresses and Letters to the Free-Citi](#)

[The Philistine Volume 35](#)

[An Introduction to the Study of Chemistry](#)

[The New Latin Tutor](#)

[The Land of the Blue Gown \[China\]](#)

[A Glimpse at the Great Western Republic](#)

[The English Review Volume 12](#)

[The Inner Flame](#)

[The Harvey Lectures Volume 11](#)

[The Book of the Prophet Isaiah Volume 20 Part 1](#)

[Drake Nelson and Napoleon](#)

[The Life of James First Duke of Ormonde 1610-1688 Volume 2](#)

[The Life of George H Stuart](#)
[Abraham Lincoln The True Story of a Great Life Volume 2](#)
[Birmingham Free Libraries Catalogue of the Reference Department](#)
[The Acts of the Apostles Or the History of the Church in the Apostolic Age Volume 2](#)
[Popular Tales of the West Highlands Orally Collected Volume 2](#)
[The Revolutionary Plutarch Exhibiting the Most Distinguished Characters Literary Military and Political in the Recent Annals of the French Republic the Greater Part from the Original Information of a Gentleman Resident at Paris Volume 3](#)
[The Christian Disciple Volume 5](#)
[The American Baptist Magazine Volume 5](#)
[an Elementary Arithmetic Serving as an Introduction to the Higher Arithmetic](#)
[The Story of the Aeroplane](#)
[The Acts of the Apostles Volume 1](#)
[The Ohio Journal of Education Volume 5](#)
[Works with an Account of His Life Criticism on His Writings C C Volume 1](#)
[The Morals of Princes Or an Abstract of the Most Remarkable Passages Containd in the History of All the Emperors Who Reignd in Rome with a Moral Reflection Drawn from Each Quotation](#)
[The Banner of Fath a Monethly Magazine Issued by the Church Extension Association Vol II for 1883](#)
[The Calcutta Review Volume 86](#)
[The Light of Nature Pursued Volume 1](#)
[The Effect of Remedial Instruction on Achievement in Seventh Grade Algebraic Linear Equations](#)
[The Museum of Science and Art Volumes 7-8](#)
[Ontario Sessional Papers 1884 No16-38](#)
[Municipal Record City and County of San Francisco](#)
[The Civil Engineer and Architects Journal Volume 27](#)
[The Novels The Two Friends Father Alexeys Story Three Meetings a Quiet Backwater](#)
[Travels in South Africa Undertaken at the Request of the Missionary Society](#)
[The Towers and Temples of Ancient Ireland Their Origin and History Discussed from a New Point of View](#)
[Darwinism An Exposition of the Theory of Natural Selection with Some of Its Applications](#)
[A History of England in the Eighteenth Century Volume 7](#)
[History of India From the First European Settlements to the Founding of the English East India Company By Sir William Wilson Hunter](#)
[Manuscrit de Mil Huit Cent Quatorze Trouve Dans Les Voitures Imperiales Prises a Waterloo Contenant LHistoire Des Six Derniers Mois Du Regne de Napoleon](#)
[Opera Omnia Canonica Civilia Et Criminalia Volume 9](#)
[Course of Lectures in Natural Philosophy](#)
[Calvinism and Arminianism Compared in Their Principles and Tendency Or the Doctrines of General Redemption as Held by the Members of the Church of England and by the Early Dutch Arminians](#)
[The Emperor-Marcus Antonius His Conversation with Himself Together with the Preliminary Discourse of the Learned Gataker](#)
[The History of the Navy of the United States of America Volume 2](#)
[Practical Introd to Latin Prose Composition](#)
[The Sky Pilot in No Mans Land](#)
[Diary and Correspondence of Samuel Pepys FRS Secretary to the Admiralty in the Reigns of Charles II and James II with a Life and Notes Volume 1 Volumes 1659-1662](#)
[Illustrations of Political Economy The Charmed Sea Berkeley the Banker in Two Parts](#)
[Admiralty Jurisdiction Law and Practice with an Appendix Containing Rules Statutes and Forms](#)
[Travels of Anacharsis the Younger in Greece During the Middle of the Fourth Century Before the Christian Aera Tr from the French in Seven Volumes and an Eighth in Quarto Containing Maps Plan \[Etc\] Volume 6](#)
[Elements of Practical Medicine](#)
