

## AN EASY INTRODUCTION TO THE GAME OF CHESS

"Pie, pie, pie, pie, pie, pie, pie, pie," Barty repeated in the same tone of self-satisfied delight that he used when announcing "Barty potty." He didn't rely, either, on a sixth sense to detect obstacles or open spaces, which some blind people claimed to have. Sometimes instinct told him that in his path was an object that ordinarily would not have been there; but as often as not, it went undetected, and unless he was using his cane, he tripped over it. The sixth sense was greatly overrated. So Otter worked along with them with a clear head and an angry heart. They were in a trap. What's the use of a gift of power, he thought, if not to get out of a trap? Like a disc fish with silvery scales, the coin lay in the cup of Junior's palm. Directly over his life line. On the second morning of Barty's illness, Agnes came downstairs and found him at the kitchen table, in his pajamas, happily applying unconventional hues to a scene in a coloring book. The toast now came to Celestina. "To Phimie, who will be with me in memory every hour of every day for the rest of my life, until she is with me again for real. And to ... to this most momentous day." Earlier, the dirty-sheet clouds had been wrung dry. Now, the trees that overhung the house had finally stopped dripping on the cedar shingled roof. The night was so still that Agnes could hear the sea softly breaking upon the shore more than half a mile away. 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. Almost as an afterthought, as he was leaving, he tucked the brochure for "This Momentous Day" into a jacket pocket. There would be amusement value in hearing a group of cutting-edge young artists analyze Celestina's greeting-card images. Besides, as the Academy of Art College was the premier school of its type on the West Coast, a few of the partygoers might actually know her and be able to give him some valuable background. The party raged in a cavernous loft on the third-and top-floor of a converted industrial building, the communal residence and studio of a group of artists who believed that art, sex, and politics were the three hammers of violent revolution, or something like that. Nolly shook his head, setting a cotillion of warts and moles adance on his pendulous cheeks. "Ask any adoptee who, as an adult, has tried to team the names of his real parents. Easier to drag a freight train up a mountain by your teeth." Thrusting his finger toward the table with each repetition of the word, Barty happily insisted, "Pie, pie, pie, pie, pie, pie, pie, pie." The opening paragraph still lingered in his memory, because he had crafted it with great care: Greetings on this momentous day. I'm writing to you about an exceptional woman, Agnes Lampion, whose life you have touched without knowing, and whose story may interest you. "It's a lot," Angel insisted. "Wally gave me an Oreo, last time I saw him. You like Oreos?" Barty turned away from her, surveyed the kitchen, and said, "Ah. The twisty is me." As to the distressing matter of Seraphim's daughter, Junior at first decided to return to San Francisco to torture the truth out of Nolly Wulfstan. Then he realized that he'd been referred to Wulfstan by the same man who had told him that Thomas Vanadium was missing and was believed to be Victoria Bressler's killer. Thereafter, he was repelled at the prospect of kissing her, and their relationship fell apart. He tried to lean back as he dropped, with the hope that he would fall under her, providing cushion if they met with sidewalk instead of lawn. By the time he ordered cr?me brulee for dessert, he was able to laugh at himself. Had he expected to see a ghost enjoying a cocktail and free cashews at the bar? Agnes had struggled recently to find a way to explain to Barty that his uncles had lost their hope, to convey also what it meant to live without hope-and somehow to tell the boy all this without burdening him, at such a young age, with the details of what his monstrous grandfather, Agnes's father, had done to her and to her brothers. The task was beyond her abilities. The fact that Barty was a prodigy six times over didn't make his mother's work easier, because in order to understand her, he would require experience and emotional maturity, not just intellect. She looked around the room. "He's invisible like the Cheshire cat?" "His whole world is as real as ours, but we can't see it, and people in his world can't see us. There're millions and millions of worlds all here in the same place and invisible to one another, where we keep getting chance after chance to live a good life and do the right thing." "You feel remorse, though," said Agnes. "I can see you do. And not just because of what happened to your hands." Three times, the singing faded away, but twice, just when he thought that she had finished, she began to croon again. The third time, the silence lasted. He had not yet disposed of her personal effects. In the dark, he went to the dresser, opened a drawer, and found a cotton sweater that she had worn recently. "Oh, sure, I know," Mary said. "But when it's a bad place, you feel it before you go in. So you just go around to the next place that isn't bad. No big deal." "What room has Mrs. Lombardi been moved to?" she asked. "I'd like to ... to see her before I go." "No, I didn't see him," Junior reminded the attorney. "I just assumed, when this harassment started here-". Shivering, Junior slammed the trunk lid and warily surveyed the lonely landscape. Black pines spread bristled arms through the charry night, and the moon cast down a jaundiced light that seemed to obscure more than it illuminated. According to his wristwatch, the time was 9:05 in the morning on this momentous day. Dropped, the wineglass had shattered. But the bottle of Merlot had survived again, rolling across the vinyl-tile floor until it bumped gently against the base of a cabinet. In the top drawer, in addition to the expected items, Tom Vanadium found a gallery brochure for an art exhibition. In the hooded flashlight beam, the name Celestina White seemed to flare off the glossy paper as though printed in reflective ink. Curiosity brought him here. Curiosity and a talent for self-preservation. Earlier, Vanadium had not come to Naomi's graveside as a mourner. He had been there as a cop, on business. Perhaps he had been at the other funeral on business, too. Junior had almost fumbled his fork when he recognized the tune. His heart raced. His hands were suddenly clammy. A fine carpenter can wield a hammer with an economy of movement and accuracy as elegant as the motions of a symphony conductor with a baton. A cop directing traffic can make a rough ballet out of the work. However, of all the humble tasks that men and women can transform into visual poetry by the application of athletic agility and grace, clambering into a Dumpster holds the least

promise of beautification..With a smudge of flour on one cheek, wiping her hands on a red-and-white checkered dishtowel, Agnes answered the door, saw the car in the driveway, and said, "Paul! You're not walking?".NED--"CALL ME NEDDY"--Gnathic was as slim as a flute, with a flute-quantity of holes in his head from which thought could escape before the pressure of it built into an unpleasant music within I his skull. His voice was always soft and harmonious, but frequently he spoke allegro, sometimes even prestissimo, and in spite of his mellow tone, Neddy at maximum tempo was as irritating to the ear as bagpipes bleating out Bolero, if such a thing were possible..This galerieur was tall, with silver hair, chiseled features, and the all-knowing, imperious manner of a gynecologist to royalty. He wore a well-tailored gray suit, and his gold Rolex was the very watch that Wroth Griskin might have killed for in his salad days..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..From childhood, Celestina was encouraged to be confident that life had meaning, and when she'd needed to share that belief with Dr. Lipscomb as he struggled to come to terms with his experience in the operating room, she'd done so without hesitation. Strangely, however, she herself was having difficulty absorbing these two small miracles.."Be quiet, sugarpie," she said, crossing the bedroom to the door, which stood only slightly ajar..able to reconcile these opposed forces, she was all but paralyzed by indecision..She only half understood their frantic conversation, partly because the ability to concentrate was draining from her along with her lifeblood, but also because she was distracted by Joey. He was no longer in the wreck, but standing at the open rear door of the ambulance.."The piece that's intrigued me," Junior revealed, "is the one that's rather like a c-c-candlestick. It's quite different from the others."..On Tuesday, less than twenty-four hours after Naomi's funeral, Knacker, Hisscus, and Nork--representing the state and the county held preliminary meetings with Junior's lawyer and with the attorney for the grieving Hackachak clan. As before, the well-tailored trio was conciliatory, sensitive, and willing to reach an accommodation to prevent the filing of a wrongful-death suit..This wasn't a new sensation. He had experienced it before. In the night just passed, when he awakened from an unremembered dream and saw the bright quarter dancing across Vanadium's knuckles..All three of these sorry excuses for human beings were money mad. Rudy owned six successful used-car dealerships and--his pride--a Ford franchise selling new and used vehicles, in five Oregon communities, but he liked to live large; he also visited Vegas four times a year, pouring money away as casually as he might empty his bladder. Sheena enjoyed Vegas, too, and was a fiend for shopping. Kaitlin liked men, pretty ones, but since she might be mistaken for her father in a dimly lighted room, her hunks came at a price..After the latest concerned nurse departed, Sheena leaned close. She cruelly pinched Junior's cheek between thumb and forefinger, as if she' might tear off a gobbet of flesh and pop it into her mouth..AS MEANINGFUL AS Jacob's death had been within the small world of his family, Agnes Lampion never lost sight of the fact that there were more resonant deaths in the larger world before 1968 ended and the Year of the Rooster followed. On the fourth of April, James Earl Ray gunned down Martin Luther King on a motel balcony in Memphis, but the assassin's hopes were foiled when, because of this murder, freedom grew more vigorously from the richness of a in martyr's blood. On June 1, Helen Keller died peacefully at eighty-seven. Blind and deaf since early childhood, mute until her adolescence, Miss Keller led a life of astonishing accomplishment; she learned to speak, to ride horses, to waltz; she graduated cum laude from Radcliffe, an inspiration to millions and a testament to the potential in even the most blighted life. On June 5, Senator Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated in the kitchen of the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. Unknown numbers died when Soviet tanks invaded Czechoslovakia, and hundreds of thousands perished in the final days of the Cultural Revolution in China, many eaten in acts of cannibalism sanctioned by Chairman Mao as acceptable political action. John Steinbeck, novelist, and Tallulah Bankhead, actress, came to the end of their journeys in this world, if not yet in all others. But James Lovell, William Anders, and Frank Borman-the first men to orbit the moon-traveled 250,000 miles into space, and all returned alive..There was an otter in our brook.Holding hands, Barty and Angel led the adults into the kitchen, to the back door. This procession had a ceremonial quality that intrigued Tom, and by the time they stepped onto the porch, he was impatient to know why everyone-except he and Wally-was emotionally airborne, one degree of altitude below euphoria..Jacob had become a card mechanic for one purpose. Not because he'd ever be a gambler. Not to wow friends with card tricks. Not because the challenge intrigued him. He wanted to be able to give Agnes winning cards once in a while, if she was losing too frequently or needed to have her spirits lifted. He didn't feed her winning hands often enough to make her suspicious or to make the games less fun for EDOM or Joey. He was judicious. The effort he expended-the thousands of hours of practice-was repaid with interest each time Agnes laughed with delight after being dealt a perfect hand.."Cancer," she whispered, and superstitiously reproached herself for speaking the word aloud, as though thereby she'd given power to the malignancy and ensured its existence..In each savings account, he deposited five hundred dollars in cash. He tucked twenty thousand in crisp new bills into each safe-deposit box..IN HOSPITALS, AS in farmhouses, breakfast comes soon after dawn, because both healing and growing are hard work, and long days of labor required to save the human species, which spends as mu& time earning its pain and hunger as it does trying to escape them..Junior Cain definitely was not a crazed sex-killer, not driven to homicide by weird lusts beyond his control. A single night of sex and death-an indulgence never to be repeated-wouldn't require serious self-examination or a reconsideration of his self-image.."I was raised to understand it," said Celestina, and when she looked across the room, she saw that her words had moved her mother..An hour later, when Barty decided he wanted a soda, he switched off the book and asked Angel if she would like something to drink..He might not have this future-living

thing down perfectly, but he was absolutely terrific at anger..Perhaps the paramedic had given him an injection, a sedative. the howling ambulance rocked along on this most momentous day, Junior Cain wept profoundly but quietly--and achieved temporary peace in a dreamless sleep..This morning, as Barty stood to one side listening, his mother asked Maria for poems by Emily Dickinson.."Done," Agnes said. "Now put away the three dollars, and let's have our lesson before my water breaks."..of fists, hard blows, and his father's heavy breathing as he deals out the punishment. Edom himself lies face down in.The shakes returned, became more violent than previously--and then once more passed..He shook his head. "I think he's evil, not crazy. And stupid in the way that evil often is. Too arrogant and too vain to be aware of his stupidity--and therefore always tangled up in traps of his own making. But nonetheless dangerous for being stupid. In fact, far more dangerous than a wiser man with a sense of consequences.".."I'm gonna dream about baby chickens," she told Celestina, "and if I'm all yellow, they'll think I'm one of them."..deodar cedars with layers of drooping branches surrounded the place, and usually they seemed sheltering, but now they loomed, ominous..Any reasonable person would agree that the line between legitimate and harassment was hair-thin..The prickly-bur ghosts of two little children didn't concern him. At worst, they were spiritual gnats..To become a physical therapist, Junior had taken more than massage classes, so he knew what hematemesi meant. Hematemesi: vomiting of blood..Standing at graveside, Junior was in a foul mood. He was weary of pretending to be deep in grief..This is, of course, the purpose of art: to disturb you, to leave you uneasy with yourself and wary of the world, to undermine your sense of reality in order to make you reconsider all that you think you know. The finest art should shatter you emotionally, devastate you intellectually, leave you physically ill, and fill you with loathing for those cultural traditions that bind us and weigh us down and drown us in a sea of conformity. Junior had learned this much, already, from his art appreciation course..Reading the dates on the headstone, he saw that the minister's daughter had died on the seventh of January, the day after Naomi had fallen from the fire tower. If ever asked, Junior would have no trouble accounting for his whereabouts on that day.."I'm not. I'm just going to be the conscience that Enoch Cain seems to have been born without."..The apartment above Elena's Fashions could be reached by a set of exterior stairs at the back of the building. The climb had never before taxed Agnes in the least, but now it took away her breath and left her legs trembling by the time she reached the top landing..On that busy night, with Vanadium's corpse in the Studebaker and Victoria's cadaver awaiting a fiery disposal at her house, Junior was too distracted to recognize the pertinence of the message. Now it tormented him from a dark nook in his subconscious..Swift and yellow, Angel flew to her mother, grabbing at one of the bunched drapes as if she might hide behind it..From San Francisco south to Orange County Airport on a crowded commuter flight, then farther south along the coast by rental car, Paul Damascus brought Grace, Celestina, and Angel to the Lampion house. "Before we go to my place, there's someone I very much want you to meet. She's not expecting us, but I'm sure it'll be okay."..He didn't allow himself to ponder why Vanadium had come here or what relationship might have existed between the cop and Victoria. All that was for later consideration, after he had dealt with this unholy mess..Stopping at the door without opening it, Vanadium turned to stare at Junior, but said nothing..Suddenly so many of Zedd's greatest maxims seemed to conflict with one another, when previously they had together formed a reliable philosophy and guide to success..No doubt thinking about the land of the big bugs, into which she had pushed Enoch Cain, which was exactly what Barty had suddenly thought about, Angel said, "Honey, this is amazing, it's wonderful, but you've got to be careful."..The galerieur's icy demeanor thawed marginally at this proof of taste and financial resources. He either smiled or grimaced at a vague but unpleasant smell-hard to tell which--and identified himself as the owner, Maxim Coquin..Number three on the charts was "Mr. Lonely," by Bobby Vinton, an American talent from Canonsburg, Pennsylvania. Junior sang along..self-controlled as he would need to be in any interrogation conducted by this brush-cut, thick-necked toad..He planned, as soon as they took him out of his cell, to use the old Changers spell of self-transformation and so escape. Surely his life was in danger, and it would be all right to use the spell? Only he couldn't decide what to turn himself into--a bird, or a wisp of smoke, what would be safest? But while he was thinking about it, Losen's men, used to wizard's tricks, drugged his food and he ceased to think of anything at all. They dumped him into a mule-cart like a sack of oats. When he showed signs of reviving during the journey, one of them bashed him on the head, remarking that he wanted to make sure he got his rest..As a matter of principle, Junior considered firing the slit-mouthed troll on the spot, but then Magusson said, "You shouldn't be bothered any further by Detective Vanadium."..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..altogether by taking slow deep breaths, slow deep breaths, and by remembering that each of us has a right to be happy, to be fulfilled, to be free of fear..Agnes's big brother by six years, Edom had lived in one of the two apartments above the large detached garage, behind the main house, since he was twenty-five, when he'd left the working world. He was now thirty-six..In fact, although weak and achy, Junior felt mentally refreshed and wonderfully alert.."Yeah," he confirmed, applying a blue crayon to a grinning bunny that was dancing with a squirrel..Another pocket. More cartridges. Trying to squeeze just two into the magazine, but his hands shaking and slippery with sweat..First he tore two paper towels from a wall-mounted dispenser and held one in each hand, as makeshift gloves. He was determined to leave no fingerprints..The wine tasted bitter, but Celestina knew that it was sweet. The bitterness was in her, not in the legacy of the grape..Gifted with unusual powers of visual observation, the girl was quick to notice the slightest changes in her world. The sparkling engagement ring on Celestina's left hand had not escaped her notice..During the past week, he had ferreted out what he could about the nurse. She was thirty, divorced, without kids, and lived alone..Agnes discovered, from her research, that among child prodigies, Barty was not a wonder of wonders. Some math whizzes were absorbed by algebra and even by geometry before their third birthdays. Jascha Heifetz, became an accomplished violinist at three, and by six,

he played the concertos of Mendelssohn and Tchaikovsky; Ida Haendel performed them when she was five..Tom pointed to the nearly finished martini that stood on the table before him. Balanced on the thin rim of the glass: impossibly, precariously--the coin..He moved from a crib to a bed of his own, with guardrails, months ahead of the average toddler. Within a week, he requested that the rails be left down..His daughter, his affliction, his millstone, granddaughter of the boil-giving voodoo Baptist ....Edom's twin, Jacob, who had never held a job, lived in the second apartment. He'd been there since graduating from high school..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..The boy fell and rolled even as he pitched the can, anticipating the shots that Cain fired, which cracked into the doorframe inches from Tom's knees..Another small pane of glass burst. A dismaying crack of wood. His back to her, the maniac raged at the window with the snarling ferocity of a caged beast..His words echoed back to her from July: My cold's just here, not every place I am..Her name was Victoria Bressler, and she was an attractive blonde. She would never have been serious competition For Naomi, because Naomi had been singularly stunning, but Naomi, after all, was gone..you greater strength and determination than any other motive. But you should know this much.... You need to keep her safe for another reason. She's special. I don't want to explain why she's special or how I know that she is, because this isn't the time or place, not with your dad's death and Wally in the hospital and you still shaky from the attack..Three times, Mary vanished, and three times she reappeared, before she led the bamboozled Koko to her mother and father. "Neat, huh?".The third-floor apartment directly over Enoch Cain's unit had been leased by Simon Magusson, through his corporation, ever since it became available in March of '66, twenty-two months ago..If Cain had been attracted to one woman by her looks, surely he would be attracted to the other. And perhaps the sisters shared a quality other than beauty that drew Cain with even greater power. Innocence, perhaps, or goodness: both foods for a demon..He couldn't see into the next aisle through the gaps between rows of books, because the shelves had solid backs..He already had the pistol he had taken from Frieda Bliss's collection, but it didn't come with a sound-suppressor. He was preparing for all contingencies. Focus..This graciousness didn't free Paul to speak. Instead, he felt his throat thicken, trapping his voice more tightly still..Spruce Hills, but also those in the entire county, maybe seventy or eighty thousand.. "Why? What was he going to get out of it?".Find the father, kill the son. In just nine days, Junior bedded four beautiful women: one on Christmas Eve, the next on Christmas Night, the third on New Year's Eve, and the fourth on New Year's Day. For the first time in his life-and on all four occasions-his joy in the act was less than complete..She thought that she already knew all about humility, about the necessity of it, about the power of it to bring peace of mind and to heal the heart, but in the following few minutes, she learned more about humility than she had ever known before..The boy didn't at once answer, and when Agnes looked up from Red Planet, she saw that he was staring oddly at her. He squinted, as if puzzled, and said, "The twisty spots just jumped off the page right up on your face..".Shortly after nine-thirty in the morning, they landed in Eugene, and the cab driver who conveyed Junior to the town's largest shopping center spent more time staring at his afflicted passenger in the rearview mirror than he did watching the road. Junior got out of the taxi and paid through the driver's open window. The cabbie didn't even wait for his fiery-faced fare to turn completely away before he crossed himself..He'd been invited to a Christmas Eve celebration with a satanic theme, but he hadn't intended to go. The party was not being thrown by real Satanists, which might have been interesting, but by a group of young artists, all nonbelievers, who shared a wry sense of humor..Had Junior been chest-deep in wet concrete, he would have been more mobile than he was now. He had no feeling in his legs..The presence of the brochure disturbed Vanadium also because he assumed that after being dead-ended by Nolly, Cain had subsequently discovered that Celestina had taken custody of the baby to raise it as her own. For some reason, the nine-toed wonder originally believed the child was a boy, but if he'd tracked down Celestina, he now knew the truth..He pressed his right ear to the door, held his breath, heard nothing, and addressed the top lock first. Quietly, he slid the thin pick of the lock-release gun into the key channel, under the pin tumblers..In the faraway, at the limits of night and fog, the dog bit off his bark in expectation..Sparky wasn't a bad guy, not easily bought, and if he'd been asked to sell out any tenant other than Cain, he probably wouldn't have done so at any price. He greatly disliked Cain, however, and considered him to be "as strange and creepy as a syphilitic monkey..".He kept the house, for it was a shrine to his life with Perri. He returned to it from time to time, to refresh his spirit..Agnes was only thirty-nine years old, full of plans and vigor, so Angel's words seemed premature. Yet in too few years, she would have reason to wonder if perhaps these gifted children foresaw, unconsciously, that she would need the comfort of having witnessed this climb..The time had come for him to think more seriously about his situation and his future. Self-improvement remained a laudable goal, but his efforts needed to be more focused.

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