

## **CENCES OF THE RIGHT HON LORD OBRIEN OF KILFENORA LORD CHIEF JUSTICE**

They came to her, picked up the luggage that she had put down, and Edom said, "I'll drive." Fed up with them and with this exhibition, Junior half wished that he would again be stricken by violent nervous emesis. Even in his suffering, he would enjoy spraying these insistently appealing canvases with the reeking ejecta of his gut: criticism of the most pungent nature.."-and whenever the good Pharaoh was here in San Francisco, a few times each year, he always stopped by St. Anselmo's to entertain the boys--". "Get this through your head, you shit-for-brains. I lost a daughter, a precious daughter, my Naomi, the light of my life." He stood watching until the car cruised out of sight, and even after it dwindled to a speck and vanished in the distance, he stared at the point in the street where it had last been, stared while a breeze turned playful, tossing eucalyptus leaves around his feet, stared until at last he turned and began the long walk home.. "Look at it this way, Aggie. All the pies, all the things you do-that's betting on life. And now you've just been given the great blessing of being able to place larger bets." Concerned that Junior's crying jag would trigger spasms of the abdominal muscles and ultimately another attack of hemorrhagic vomiting, the nurse had with her a tranquilizer. She wanted him to use the apple juice to wash down the pill.. "That's right," Celestina told Wally. "This isn't wagering. What's wrong with you?" 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.. He wanted to say: The vain, power-mad politicians who milk cheers from ignorant crowds, the sports stars and preening actors who hear themselves called heroes and never object, they should all wither with shame at the mention of your name. Your vision, your struggle, the years of grueling work, your enduring faith when others doubted, the risk you took with career and reputation--it's one of the great stories of science, and I'd be honored if I could shake your band.. The fact that Barty saw twisty spots with either eye closed had prepared Agnes for this bleak news. Yet in spite of the defense that foreknowledge provided her, the teeth of sorrow bit deep.. Angel followed him and observed as he climbed a stepstool and unhooked the telephone handset. He dialed with little pause between digits, and spoke with each of his uncles.. Opening the directory to the marker, he found a card tucked between the pages. A joker, with BARTHOLOMEW in red block letters.. But when the lore-books of a wizard came into a warlord's hands he was likely to treat them with caution, locking them away to keep them harmless or giving them to a wizard in his hire to do with as he wished. In the margins of the spells and word lists and in the endpapers of these books of lore a wizard or his prentice might record a plague, a famine, a raid, a change of masters, along with the spells worked in such events and their success or unsuccess. Such random records reveal a clear moment here and there, though all between those moments is darkness. They are like glimpses of a lighted ship far out at sea, in darkness, in the rain.. "Sure. Or why don't I pull a Rumpelstiltskin and demand one of her children for payment' ". The way one does research into nonexistent history is to tell the story and find out what happened. I believe this isn't very different from what historians of the so-called real world do. Even if we are present at some historic event, do we comprehend it-can we even remember it-until we can tell it as a story? And for events in times or places outside our own experience, we have nothing to go on but the stories other people tell us. Past events exist, after all, only in memory, which is a form of imagination. The event is real now, but once it's then, its continuing reality is entirely up to us, dependent on our energy and honesty. If we let it drop from memory, only imagination can restore the least glimmer of it. If we lie about the past, forcing it to tell a story we want it to tell, to mean what we want it to mean, it loses its reality, becomes a fake. To bring the past along with us through time in the hold-alls of myth and history is a heavy undertaking; but as Lao Tzu says, wise people march along with the baggage wagons.. That would not be a productive use of his time. Satisfying, but not prudent. Zedd tells us that time is the most precious thing we have, because we're born with so little of it.. "Miss White was admitted to St. Mary's late January fifth," said Nolly, "with dangerous hypertension, a complication of pregnancy." Tom Vanadium's uninflected but curiously hypnotic voice, his pensive manner, his gray eyes so beautiful in that fractured face, his air of measured melancholy, and his evident intelligence gave him a presence that was simultaneously as solid as a great mass of granite and yet otherworldly.. Standing at graveside, Junior was in a foul mood. He was weary of pretending to be deep in grief.. Curious to know what Neddy had said, Junior quickly approached the same gallery staffer. "Excuse me, but I've been looking for my friend ever so long in this mob, and then I saw him talking to you-the gentleman in the London Fog and the tux-and now I've lost him again. He didn't say if he was leaving, did he? He's my ride home." Celestina had no illusions about playing detective. She would never be able to track down the bastard, and she had no stomach for confronting him.. Being ruthlessly honest with himself, as always, he acknowledged that killing Tammy would not solve his problem. She might have told friends and colleagues about the Rolex, just as she had surely shared with her girlfriends the juiciest details about Junior's unequalled lovemaking. During the two months that he and the cat woman dated, others had heard her call him Eenie. He couldn't kill Tammy and all her friends and colleagues, at least not on a timely enough schedule to thwart the police.. When the ophthalmologist saw her misery, his kind face softened further, and his pity became palpable.. More likely than not, Victoria spoke directly to the maniac detective. Even if she reported her sordid fabrications to another officer, it would have gotten back to Vanadium, and the cop would have sought her out at once to hear her filth firsthand, whereupon she would have enhanced her story until it sounded as though Junior had grabbed her knockers and had tried to shove his tongue down her throat.. For guidance, Agnes couldn't rely entirely on any of the child rearing books in her library. Barty's unique gifts presented her with special parenting problems. Now, when he asked if he could stay up even later, to read about John Thomas Stuart and Lummo, John's pet from another world, she granted him permission.. In a neatly groomed neighborhood of unassuming houses, Vanadium's place

was as unremarkable as those around it: a single-story rectangular box of no discernible architectural style. White aluminum siding with green shutters. An attached two-car garage..The window gave way an instant before Celestina squeezed off the shot. The man dropped out of sight. She didn't know if she had scored a hit..As kids-living in a house that was run like a prison, stifled by the oppressive rule of a morose father who believed that any form of entertainment was an offense against God-they conducted secret card games as their primary act of rebellion. A deck of cards was small enough to hide quickly and to keep hidden successfully even during one of their father's painstakingly thorough room searches..Rescuers appeared with hydraulic pry bars and metal cutting saws. Civilians were shepherded back to the sidewalks..She closed her eyes, and he thought that she was gone, but then she opened them again. "There is one place beyond all the ways things are..".Although he was seventy-six, Tom still worked for Pie Lady Services. They had no set retirement age for staff, and Father Tom expected to die at his work. "And if it's a pie-caravan day, just leave my old carcass where I drop until you make all the deliveries. I won't be responsible for anyone missing a promised pie..".NOLLY SAT BEHIND his desk, suit jacket draped over the back of the chair, porkpie hat still squarely on his head, where it remained at virtually all times except when he was sleeping, showering, dining in a restaurant, or making love..For more than twenty-three years, he'd given his big toe little consideration, had taken it for granted, had treated it with shameful neglect. Now this lower digit seemed precious, a comparatively small fixture of flesh, but as important to his image of himself as his nose or either of his eyes..She was astonished and moved. "I'm a hopeless throwback to the nineteenth century. How could you realize what's been on my mind?..".Sudden rain spared her the need to finish the sentence. A few fat drops drew both their faces to the sky, and even as they rose to their feet, this brief light paradiddle of sprinkles gave way to a serious drumming..He moved the shaker across the tablecloth, rocking it back and forth to convey that he was strolling without a care in the world..Yet had the obstacles been piled twice as high, the time had come to put into words what they felt for each other and to decide what they intended to do about it. Celestina knew that in depth and intensity, as well as in the promise of passion, Wally's love for her equaled hers for him; out of respect for her and perhaps because the sweet man doubted his desirability, he tried to conceal the true power of his feelings and actually thought he succeeded, though in fact he was radiant with love. His once-brotherly kisses on the cheek, his touches, his admiring looks were all still chaste but ever more tender with the passage of time; and when he held her hand-as in the gallery this evening-whether as a show of support or simply to keep her safely beside him in a crosswalk on a busy street, dear Wally was overcome by a wistfulness and a longing that Celestina vividly remembered from Junior high school, when thirteen-year-old boys, their gazes filled with purest adoration, would be struck numb and mute by the conflict between yearning and inexperience. On three occasions recently, he seemed on the brink of revealing his feelings, which he would expect to surprise if not shock her, but the moment had never been quite right..".Enough," said the nurse, and the nun reached through clouds of steam to crank off the water..If the wife killer had cut himself accidentally, his writing on the wall indicated a hair-trigger temper and a deep reservoir of long-nurtured anger..Junior took two steps toward him, sighting the gun on his face. "Why should I be afraid of a stumbling blind boy no bigger than a midget?..".Tom believed that the girl had an intuitive understanding of the true complexity of the world, but she was only three, after all, and neither ready nor able to absorb the scientific theory that supported her intuition..Thus began the first day of the last weekend of their old lives. Maria visited on Saturday, sitting in the kitchen, embroidering the collar and cuffs of a blouse, while Agnes baked pies..To celebrate, Junior went to a gallery and purchased the second piece of art in his collection. Not sculpture this time: a painting..Raise high the candlestick. In spite of the masking music, breathe shallowly and through the mouth. Remain poised, ready..".What kept me going these past two and a half years was knowing that I could get my hands on Mr. Cain when I was finally well enough to do something about him..".A pink spot in the center of Victoria's forehead marked the point of impact. Soon it would be an ugly bruise. The skull bone did not appear to have been cratered..guarantee against self-incrimination, a slap in the face of justice, a violation of the rights of man..Astonished and appalled by the cop's insensitivity, Junior said, "You just drop this on me? I lost my wife and my baby. My wife and my baby..".As Wally got behind the wheel and closed his door, Angel said, "Mommy, where's fog come from? And don't say Hawaii..".To prove himself, he read a little of Dickens when she requested it, a passage from Great Expectations. Then a passage from Twain..Angel liked to perch sideways with a drawing tablet in the window seat in Barty's room, look out at the oak tree from the upper floor, and draw pictures inspired by things she heard in whatever book he was currently listening to. Everyone said she was a pretty good artist for a three-year-old, and Barty wished he could see how good she was. He wished he could see Angel, too, just once..Although she already knew that the answer could not be cheerily optimistic, Celestina wondered, "Is the baby likely to be . . . normal?..".While Jacob had shuffled, Agnes had taken little Barty from his bassinet into her arms. She was surprised and discomfited to discover that the baby was to have his fortune told first..Saturday morning, Paul made himself useful by assisting Grace with food preparation and by setting out the plates, flatware, and glasses on the dining-room sideboard..Yet for all his love of reading and of music, events suggested that for mathematics he had a still greater aptitude..The man, whom the others called Licky, led him out into a hot, bright morning that dazzled his eyes. Leaving his cell he had felt the spellbonds loosen and fall away, but there were other spells woven about other buildings of the place, especially around a tall stone tower, filling the air with sticky lines of resistance and repulsion. If he tried to push forward into them his face and belly stung with jabs of agony, so that he looked at his body in horror for the wound; but there was no wound. Gagged and bound, without his voice and hands to work magic, he could do nothing against these spells. Licky had tied one end of a braided leather cord around his neck and held the other end, following him. He let Otter walk into a couple of the spells, and after that Otter avoided them. Where they were was plain enough: the dusty pathways bent to miss them..A

nurse in surgical greens appeared. "Pull up the sleeves of your scrub nearly to your elbows. Scrub hard. I'll tell you when to stop." Holding on to the jamb with one hand, Barty leaned across the threshold, listening to the day. Birds. Softly rustling leaves. Nobody on the porch. Even trying hard to be quiet, people always made some little noise. Rising slowly like the blade in the hands of an ax murderer as deliberate as an accountant, Thomas Vanadium's gaze arced from Junior's clenched fist to his face. The sight of her sister's blood and the persistence of the flow made Celestina weak with apprehension. She was afraid she had done the wrong thing by delaying hospitalization. "Yes, you did, and it's exactly what experience has no doubt taught you to think. But I'm forty-seven and you're twenty-". Paul recalled the letter he had written to Reverend Harrison White a couple weeks after the death of Joey Lampion. He'd carried it home from the pharmacy on the day that Perri died, to ask for her opinion of it. The letter had never been mailed. Saturday and Sunday, between sessions with the directory, Junior cruised around the county on a series of pleasure drives-testing the theory that the maniac cop was no longer following him. Apparently, Simon Magusson was correct: The case had been closed. Initially, Helen Greenbaum, at Greenbaum Gallery, had taken on three canvases, and had sold them within a month. She took four more, then another three when two of the four moved quickly. By the time that she'd placed ten pieces with collectors, Helen decided to include Celestina in a show of six new artists. And now, already, she had a show of her own. When he killed the Bartholomew, this haunting would finally end, too. In Junior's mind, Vanadium and Bartholomew were inextricably linked, because it was the maniac cop who first heard Junior calling out Bartholomew in his sleep. Did that make sense? Well, it made more sense at some times than at others, but it always made a lot more sense than anything else. To be rid of the dead-but-persistent detective, he must eliminate Bartholomew. They wore out a lot of cards and kept a generous supply of all types of decks on hand. Six paces past that marker floorboard, Barty had the strangest feeling that someone was in the hallway with him. By Sunday evening, a combination of factors-deep commitment to the philosophy of Zedd, explosive testosterone levels, boredom, self-pity, and a desire to be a risk-taking man of action once more-motivated Junior to splash a little Hai Karate behind each ear and go courting. Shortly after sunset, with a single red rose and a bottle of Merlot, he set off for Victoria Bressler's place. 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. Just as Celestina snapped shut the latches on the suitcase and turned to the door, a nurse's aide entered, pushing a cart loaded with towels and bed linens. As he'd proved to himself on his previous two visits-his first night in town and then two nights thereafter-this number was merely part of the pianist's repertoire. Nothing supernatural here. His leonine head and bold features, framed by golden hair, should have conveyed strength, but the impression he might have made was compromised by a fringe of bangs that curled across his forehead, a style unfortunately reminiscent of effete emperors of ancient Rome. This was pathetic. Only thickheaded fools, unschooled and unworldly, would be shaken into confession by ham-handed tactics like these. Judging by the evidence, the nurse was home alone, but Junior raised his voice above the music and called out, "Hello? Is anyone here?". Even at this post midnight hour, the lounge would sometimes be as crowded with worried loved ones as at any other time of the day. This morning, however, the only life under the threat of the scythe appeared to be Wally's; the sole vigil being kept was for him. He considered calling her, but he didn't know what he would say if she answered. Jacob's mentor had been a man named Obadiah Sepharad. They had met when Jacob was eighteen, during a period when he'd been committed to a psychiatric ward for a short time, his eccentricity having been briefly mistaken for something worse. MONDAY MORNING, January 17, Agnes's lawyer, Vinnie Lincoln, came to the house with Joey's will and other papers requiring attention. Murmuring on the edge of sleep, Barty spoke to his father in all the places where Joey still lived: "Good-night, Daddy." In the kitchen again, Junior spread the blanket on the floor, to one side of the blood. He rolled Vanadium onto the blanket, and drew the ends of it together, fashioning a sled with which to drag the detective out of the house. Once satiated, what she desired was a reason to deceive herself into believing that she was not a slut, that she was a victim. She didn't really want to tell anyone what he had done to her. Instead, she was asking him, indirectly but indisputably, to provide her with an excuse to keep their passionate encounter secret, an excuse that would also allow her to continue to pretend that she had not begged for everything he'd done to her. For a spirit, the maniac lawman appeared disturbingly solid. He wore a tweed sports jacket and slacks that, as far as Junior could tell, were the same clothes he'd worn on the night he died. Apparently, even the ghosts of Sklent's atheistic spiritual world were stuck for eternity in the clothes in which they had perished. The most shameful thing Junior found was the "art" on the walls. Tasteless, sentimentalized realism. Bright landscapes. Still lifes of fruit and flowers. Even an idealized group portrait of Prosser, his late wife, and Zelda. Not one painting spoke to the bleakness and terror of the human condition: mere decoration, not art. Around an anemone's mouth, poised to snare, lazily but relentlessly, any passing prize. of Zedd constituted the most thoughtful, most rewarding, most reliable guide to life to be found anywhere. When Junior was Confused or troubled, he turned to Caesar Zedd and never failed to find enlightenment, guidance. When he was happy, he found in Zedd the welcome reassurance that it was all right to be successful and to love oneself. Agnes invited everyone to stay for dinner. The pies were no sooner finished than large cook pots, saucepans, colanders, and other heavy artillery were requisitioned from the Lampion culinary arsenal. If Vanadium appeared among these men, Junior would not only puke out the contents of his stomach, but also would disgorge his internal organs, every last one of them, and spew up his bones, too, until he emptied out everything within his skin. When the nurse was gone, alone with his mother as they waited for the orderly to bring a gurney, Barty said, "Come close." Some acts were distasteful, too, such as searching the lunatic lawman for his car keys and his badge. 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..And although Simon would have denied it, would even have joked that a conscience was a liability for an attorney, he possessed a moral compass. When he traveled too far along the wrong trail, that magnetized needle in his soul led him back from the land of the lost..He snatched the woman's car keys off the pavement, slid behind the wheel of the Pontiac, and drove off to find a pharmacy, the only stop that he intended to make until he reached Spruce Hills..Junior closed his weary eyes and gratefully submitted as the paramedic wiped his greasy face and his crusted lips with a cool, damp cloth.. "Only for a little while. Then he is joining me at the gallery, and after the show's over, we're having dinner together." When Renee realized that this rejection was complete and final, she-he, whatever-was transformed from well-sugared southern lady to bitter, venomous reptile. Eyes glittering with fury, lips twisted and skinned back from her teeth, she called him all kinds of bastard, stringing epithets together so effortlessly and colorfully that she enhanced his vocabulary more than had all the home-study courses that he'd ever taken, combined. "And face it, pretty-boy, you knew what I was from the moment you offered to buy me a drink. You knew, and you wanted it, wanted me, and then when we got right down to the nasty, you lost your nerve. Lost your nerve, pretty-boy, but not your need." With all twelve fragments destroyed, the curse should have been lifted from little Bartholomew: the threat of the unknown, violent enemy who was represented by the four knives. Somewhere in the world, an evil man existed who would one day have killed Barty, but now his journey through life would take him elsewhere. Eleven saints had been given twelve shares of responsibility for lifting this curse.. "Thursday it is," he said, clearly delighted to be receiving only a third of the fair-market rental from his apartment..As though he were home to a species of termites that preferred the taste of men to that of wood, Vanadium felt a squirming in his marrow..He bought knives. And then sheaths for the knives. He acquired a knife-sharpening kit and spent the evening grinding blades..Using a false name, claiming that he was an adoptee, Junior made inquiries with several child-placement organizations, as well as with state and federal agencies. He discovered that Wulfstan's story was true: Adoption records were sealed by law for the protection of the birth parents, and getting at them was all but impossible..Agnes added this stop to her route at the request of Reverend Tom Collins, the local Baptist minister whose folks unthinkingly gave him the name of a cocktail. She was friendly with all the clergymen in Bright Beach, and her pie deliveries favored no one creed..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..In the end, the reason for the walking was the walking itself. Walking gave him something to do, a needed purpose. Motion equaled meaning. Movement became a medicine for melancholy, a preventive for madness..On January 3, 1968, Paul was fewer than 250 miles from Spruce Hills, Oregon. He wasn't aware of that town's proximity, however, and he didn't, at the time, have it as his destination..Although Zedd counsels living in the future, he recognizes the need to have full recollection of the past when absolutely needed. One of his favorite techniques for jolting memories loose when the subconsciously..The gurney, one wheel rattling. The young orderly behind it, dressed all in white. And the nurse again..As one of the two paramedics hurried to the ambulance van and scrambled into the driver's seat, Agnes suffered another contraction so severe that for a tremulous moment, at the peak of the agony, she almost lost consciousness..Permissions Department, Harcourt, Inc., 6277 Sea Harbor Drive, Orlando, Florida 32887-6777. [www.harcourt.com](http://www.harcourt.com) "Darkrose and Diamond" first appeared in The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction..He didn't pause to lock the house behind them. Bright Beach, in 1965, was as free of criminals as it was untroubled by lumbering brontosaurus..He was uncharacteristically restive. His stoic nature, his long learned Jesuit philosophy regarding the acceptance of events as they unfold, and the acquired patience of a homicide detective were insufficient to prevent frustration from taking root in him. In the more than two months since Enoch Cain vanished, following the murder of Reverend White, no trace of the killer had been found. Week by week, the slender sapling of frustration had grown into a tree and then into a forest, until Tom began every morning by looking out through the tightly woven branches of impatience..By the time this operation concluded and the sulphurous Mr. Cain was brought to some form of justice, Simon might have spent twenty or twenty-five percent of the fee that he'd collected from the liability settlement in the matter of Naomi Cain's death. The attorney put a substantial price on his dignity and reputation.. "This is Detective Bellini, with the San Francisco Police Department. Is everything all right there?" He summoned enough courage to approach the nightstand. His hand trembled. He half expected the quarter to be illusory; to disappear between his pinching fingers, but it was real..From out of the fog and darkness came the slap of running feet on bricks. He was sprinting toward the back of the house.. "The one I'm about to start is Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, which is maybe pretty scary." "I'm not going anywhere," she pledged. She had realized that his voice was growing heavy with sleep. "But it's time for you to go to dreamland."..of drool. Her eyes rolled, wild with fear, and seemed not to be focused on anything..One nurse and one nun brought Celestina into the creche behind the viewing window..At first light, a nurse arrived to perform preliminary surgical prep on Barty. She pulled the boy's hair back and captured it under a tight fitting cap. With cream and a safety razor, she shaved off his eyebrows..Out of the car, along the sidewalk, up the steps, from Mercedes to mist to murder. Pistol in his right hand, lock-release gun in his left, three knives in sheaths strapped to his body..The maniac kicked once more, but because of the bracing dresser, the door wouldn't budge, so he kicked harder, again without success..In the closet, a limited wardrobe did not fully occupy available rod space. On the floor, shoes were neatly arranged toe-to-heel.. "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." As the nurse gave Junior the injection, Parkhurst said, "You're an exceptionally sensitive man, Enoch.

That's a quality to be much admired in an often unfeeling world. But in your current condition, your sensitivity is your worst enemy." A mutual interest in ballroom dancing had resulted in their introduction when each needed a new partner for a fox-trot and swing competition. Nolly had started taking lessons five years before he had met Kathleen. As she clambered through the open door into Celestina's lap, the girl said, "Uncle Wally gave me an Oreo." If Agnes knew that Jacob had been helping her game, she might never play cards with him again. She would not approve of what he had done. Consequently, his great skill as a card mechanic must be forever his secret. Although he considered tearing up the letter and throwing it away he knew that his perceptions were clouded by grief and that what he'd written might seem fine if he reviewed it in a less dark state of mind. He returned the letter to the envelope and put it in the drawer of his nightstand. The water shut off, and Junior heard the ratcheting noise of a paper-towel dispenser. Eventually, a braless blonde in shiny white plastic boots, a white miniskirt, and a hot-pink T-shirt featuring the silk-screened face of Albert Einstein, said, "Sure, I know her. Had some classes with her. She's nice enough, but she's kind of nerdy, especially for an Afro-American. I mean, they're never nerdy--am I right?" Junior considered leaving before Vanadium--still seventy-five yards away--arrived. He was afraid he would appear to be fleeing. The need for relief was tremendous, inexpressible, and the urge to urinate was irresistible, and yet he could not let go. For more than eighteen hours, his natural urinary process had been overridden by concentrative meditation. Now the golden vault was locked tight. Every time that he strained for release, a new and more hideous cramp savaged him. He felt as if Lake Mead filled his distended bladder, while Boulder Dam had been erected in his urethra. "I was twenty-three. At St. Anselmo's I was the prefect of one dormitory floor. The floor on which all the murders occurred. After that ... I decided maybe I could better protect the innocent if I were a cop. For a while, the law gave me more to hold on to than faith did." She stepped to the bed, bracketing Junior between her and Big Rude. The stream of obscene invective issuing from Sheena made Junior feel as if he had gotten in the way of a septic-tank cleanout hose. Testing Celestina's nerves as fully as Barty had tested his mother's, Angel pulled-levered -shinnied-swung herself so fast up through the tree, arriving at the boy's side while red streaks still enlivened a sky that was repainting itself purple. She stood in the crook of limbs with him, and her delighted laughter rang down through the cathedral oak.

1975 through 1978: Hare ran from Dragon, Snake fled from Horse, and '78 bounced to the beat, because disco ruled. The reborn Bee Gees dominated the airwaves. John Travolta had the look. Rhodesian rebels, grasping the dangers inherent in any battle between equals, had the manful courage to slaughter unarmed women missionaries and schoolgirls. Spinks won the title from Ali, and Ali won it back from Spinks. "The girl's baby," said Nolly, "was placed with Catholic Family Services for adoption." He produced her coat as if by legerdemain. Magically, she found her arms in the sleeves and the collar around her neck, though given her size lately, putting on anything other than a hat usually required strategy and persistence. Tom himself had decided to build a new life here, as well, assisting Agnes with her ever-expanding work. He was not yet sure whether this would include the rededication to his vows and a return to the Roman collar, or whether he would spend the rest of his days in civvies. He was delaying that decision until the Cain case was resolved. Move, move, like a runaway train, leaving the dead nuns--or at least one dead musician--far behind. After his conversation with Magusson, however, Junior realized this fear was irrational. If the detective had miraculously escaped the cold waters of the lake, he would have been in need of emergency medical treatment. He would have staggered or crawled to the county highway in search of help, unaware that Junior had framed him for Victoria's murder, too badly wounded to care about anything but getting medical attention. He found the strength to squeeze her hand tighter than before. "Be safe. Keep Angel safe." Barty rode with his mother in her green Chevrolet station wagon. Because the cakes, pies, and gifts were too numerous to be contained in one vehicle, Edom followed them in his flashier yellow-and-white '54 Ford Country Squire. Dr. Chan's manner remained professional, providing the strength that Agnes required, but his pain was evident when his gentle voice softened further: "These tumors are so advanced, we won't know until surgery if the malignancy has spread. We may already be too late. And if we aren't too late, we'll have only a small window of opportunity. A small window. Eight days would entail too much risk." Although their apartments were above the garage, back to back, each was served by a separate exterior staircase. As often as either man entered the other's domain, they might as well have lived hundreds of miles apart.

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