

THE WAYS OF ST ANTHONY

St. Mary's social workers did not arrive with dawn, so Celestina was given the privacy of one of their offices, where the wet face of the morning pressed blurrily at the windows, and where she phoned her parents with the terrible news. From here, too, she arranged with a mortician to collect Phimie's body from the cold-storage locker in the hospital morgue, embalm it, and have it flown home to Oregon. The paramedic put aside the needle, having used it, and grabbed the paddles of a Junior could neither speak nor even mewl in agony. All the saliva had been draining forward, out of his open mouth, for so long that his throat was parched and raw. He felt as though he had munched on a snack of salted razor blades that were now stuck in his pharynx. His rattling wheeze sounded like scuttling scarabs. Flush with the promise of their engagement, still excited by the success at the gallery, with Angel exuberant in spite of the hour and Oreo energized, he was amazed that they had made the transfer of the little red whirlwind from house to Buick to house with nothing else forgotten other than one purse. Celie called it ballet, but Wally thought that it was merely momentary order in chaos, the challenging-joyous-frustrating-delightful-exhilarating chaos of a life full of hope and love and children, which he wouldn't have traded for calm or kingdoms. Bartholomew's genius might have been intimidating, even off-putting, if he'd not been as much child as child genius. Likewise, he would have been wearisome if impressed by his own gifts. Drawn one after the other, two knaves of spades didn't signify two deadly enemies, but meant that the enemy already predicted by the first would be unusually powerful, exceptionally dangerous. Room by room, closet by closet, Junior conducted a search for the detective. The cop was not here. In spite of her nature, Agnes could not find forgiveness in her heart this time. Words of absolution clotted in her throat. Her bitterness dismayed her, but she could not deny it. People that he was innocent and, in fact, constitutionally incapable of premeditated murder. When Agnes crunched the ice, the nurse said, "No, no. Don't swallow it all at once. Let it melt." The Bones of the Earth. Her strength was the strength of stones only in the sense that she felt as immovable as rock, yet she found the resources to raise one arm, to place her left hand over Maria's bead-tangled fingers. "But the baby's dead." The sidewalks were crowded with businessmen in suits, hippies in flamboyant garb, groups of smartly attired suburban ladies in town to shop, and the usual forgettably dressed rabble, some smiling and some surly and some mumbling but as blank-eyed as mannequins, who might be hired assassins or poets, for all he knew, eccentric millionaires in mufti or carnival geeks who earned their living by biting heads off live chickens. His first word after mama was papa, which she taught him while showing him pictures of Joey. His third word: pie. The guesswork of a wizard is close to knowledge, though he may not know what it is he knows. The first sign of Otter's gift, when he was two or three years old, was his ability to go straight to anything lost, a dropped nail, a mislaid tool, as soon as he understood the word for it. And as a boy one of his dearest pleasures had been to go alone out into the countryside and wander along the lanes or over the hills, feeling through the soles of his bare feet and throughout his body the veins of water underground, the lodes and knots of ore, the lay and interfolding of the kinds of rock and earth. It was as if he walked in a great building, seeing its passages and rooms, the descents to airy caverns, the glimmer of branched silver in the walls; and as he went on, it was as if his body became the body of earth, and he knew its arteries and organs and muscles as his own. This power had been a delight to him as a boy. He had never sought any use for it. It had been his secret. This venerable old building, as solidly constructed as a castle, was well-insulated; noises in other apartments rarely penetrated to Junior's. Never before had he heard a neighbor's voice distinctly enough to comprehend the words spoken or, in this case, sung. Having gotten the new roof for them at cost, Agnes subsequently put together donations from a dozen individuals and one church group to cover all but two hundred dollars of the outlay. The boy dashed for the front passenger's door. Agnes didn't follow him, because she knew that he would politely but pointedly express frustration if any attempt was made to help him with a task that he could perform himself. "Nervous," he said, and howled when one of the paramedics proved to be a sadist masquerading as an angel of mercy. 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. After a hesitation, she said, "You're the boogeyman, except when I saw you, I was hiding under the bed where you're supposed to be." A cause now apparent, the fear explained, Agnes held her baby more tightly. So new to the world, he seemed already to be slipping away from her, captured by the whirlpool of a demanding destiny. Too much, far too much to contend with, and so unfair: finding the Bartholomew needle in the haystack, hives, seizures of vomiting and diarrhea, losing a toe, losing a beloved wife, wandering alone through a cold and hostile world without a heart mate, humiliated by transvestites, tormented by vengeful spirits, too intense to enjoy the benefits of meditation, Zedd dead, the prospect of prison always looming for one reason or another, unable to find peace in either needlework or sex. This humble house wasn't where you expected to hear an elaborate custom doorbell—or even any doorbell at all, since knuckles on wood were the cheapest announcement of a visitor. He had not heard the lawman rising up with malevolent intent, as he had imagined. The body had simply rolled off the backseat onto the floor during the too-sharp 180-degree turn. He stood at a window, staring down into the street, his profile to her, and in his silence he searched for the words to describe the "something extraordinary" that he had mentioned earlier. In all their years, neither twin had ever set foot beyond the limits of Bright Beach. They both appeared nervous but determined. Magusson was a small man behind a huge desk. His head appeared too large for his body, but his ears seemed no bigger than a pair of silver dollars. Large protuberant eyes, bulging with shrewdness and feverish with ambition, marked him as one who'd be hungry a minute after standing up from a daylong feast. A button nose too severely turned up

at the tip, an upper lip long enough to rival that of an orangutan, and a mean slash of a mouth completed a portrait sure to repel any woman with eyesight; but if you wanted an attorney who was angry at the world for having been cursed with ugliness and who could convert that anger into the energy and ruthlessness of a pit bull in the courtroom, even while using his unfortunate looks to gain the jurors' sympathy, then Simon Magusson was the counselor for you..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.."Who?" she shouted, though they were perched side by side on a black-leather love seat..He managed to hold the towel around his foot, but it grew dark red and disgustingly mushy..They were in the eastern hills, a mile from Jolene and Bill Klefton's place, where ten days ago, Edom had delivered blueberry pie along with the grisly details of the Tokyo-Yokohama quake of 1923..64 just a little bit ago," the girl said. "I was sitting on the porch, having a Popsicle, and I just figured it out."..At last Maria answered Jacob's question in a murmur, making the f sign of the cross once more as she spoke. "Never saw four. Never even just I see three. But four ... is to be the devil himself."..the sentences. The substance of what she said and the tone in which she said it were so perfect that it almost seemed as though an angel had relieved her of this burden by possessing her long enough to help her son understand what must happen and why..In the three years since Perri's death, he had walked thousands of miles. He hadn't kept a record of the cumulative distance, because he wasn't trying to get into Guinness or to prove anything..Now, here, lying on a bed in the emergency room of a Sacramento hospital, on a Saturday afternoon only six weeks before the camellia festival, Junior suffered under the care of a resident physician who was so young as to raise the suspicion that he was merely playing doctor..Everything was proceeding precisely as Junior had envisioned in the instant when Naomi had first discovered the rotten section of railing and had nearly fallen without assistance. The entire plan had come to him, wholly formed, in a blink, and during the following two circuits of the observation deck, he had mulled it over, seeking flaws but finding none..When the attorney finally came on the line, he sounded put-upon, as though Junior were the equivalent of a troublesome toe that he would like to shoot off..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."..When at last he spoke, real grief, quiet but profound, softened his voice: "March first, three years ago, my wife and two sons-Danny and Harry, both seven, twins-were coming home from visiting her parents in New York. Shortly after takeoff ... their plane went down."..They came to the house in Boatwright Street after dark. They kicked the door in, and Hound, standing among the armed and armored men, said, "Him. Let the others be." And to Otter he said, "Don't move," in a low, amicable voice. He sensed great power in the young man, enough that he was a little afraid of him. But Otter's distress was too great and his training too slight for him to think of using magic to free himself or stop the men's brutality. He flung himself at them and fought them like an animal till they knocked him on the head. They broke Otter's father's jaw and beat his aunt and mother senseless to teach them not to bring up crafty men. Then they carried Otter away..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..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.."I don't just think so. And I don't just know it. I feel it, exactly like you feel all the ways things are. I'll bet you feel it, too."..Nolly liked to watch her hands while she worked. They were slim, graceful, the hands of an adolescent girl..Round one hit Ichabod in the left thigh, because Junior fired while bringing the weapon up from his side, but the next two were solid torso scores. This was not bad for an amateur, even if the distance to target was nearly short enough to define their encounter as hand-to-hand combat, and Junior decided that if the deformation of his left foot hadn't prevented him from fighting in Vietnam, he would have acquitted himself exceptionally well in the war..She lost track of him. Fear knocked, knocked, on the door of her heart, because she was sure that he had vanished the way ships supposedly disappeared in the Bermuda Triangle..Judging by Grace's expression when Paul plucked the chest off the floor, he figured it was heavy. He had no way of knowing for sure, because he was in a weird state, so saturated with adrenaline that his heart squirted blood through his arteries at a speed Zeus couldn't have matched with the fastest lightning bolts in his quiver. The chest felt no heavier than a pillow, which couldn't be right, even if it was empty..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..FOR THE BETTER PART of a week, on doctor's orders, Agnes avoided stairs. She took sponge baths in the ground-floor powder room and slept in the parlor, on a sofa bed, with Barty nearby in a bassinet..Phimie's speech had been slurred later, as well, immediately following the birth of the baby, when she had struggled to convey her desire to name her daughter Angel..Barty stood in the rain, surrounded by the rain, pummeled by the rain, with the rain. Saturated grass squished under his sneakers. The droplets, in their millions, didn't bend-slip-twist magically around his form, didn't hiss into steam a millimeter from his skin. Yet he remained as dry as baby Moses floating on the river in a mother-made ark of bulrushes..Paul checked the back of the Suburban, since he fancied himself the wagonmaster. He wanted to be sure that the goods were loaded in such a way that they were unlikely to slide or be damaged. "Packed tight. Looks just fine," he declared, and closed the tailgate door..Avoiding the graveled driveway, on which he was more likely to scuff his freshly polished loafers, he approached the house across the lawn, beneath the moon-sifting branches of a great pine that made itself useless for Christmas by spreading as majestically as an oak..He hurt too much to recover quickly and take advantage of the woman's brief vulnerability. Clambering to his feet, he backed away from her and fumbled in a pocket for spare cartridges..As he turned the corner onto Jasmine Way, he felt his heart lift in expectation of the sight of his home. It wasn't a grand residence--a typical Main Street, USA, house-but it was

more splendid to Paul than Paris, London, and Rome combined, cities that he would never see and would never regret failing to see..She worried that they would argue with her, and though she knew that she was committed to her decision, she was afraid to have that commitment tested just yet..Rapt, frightened yet wonderstruck, Agnes leaned forward, squinting between the whisking wipers..Looking down at Barty, Agnes saw the ghost of Joey in the baby's face, and although she half believed that her husband would be alive now if he had never tempted fate by putting such a high price on his life, she couldn't find any anger in her heart for him. She must accept this final generosity with grace-if also without enthusiasm..Perri had been crippled seventeen years before Jonas Salk's vaccine had spared future generations from the curse of polio..So runs the water away..Toward the front of the house, along a hallway suddenly as dark as a tunnel, toward a vague light in the seething gloom. And here a window at the end of the hall..Through miles of worry, natural beauty, imagined omens, and the iron-red sands of Mars, they drove at last to Franklin Chan's offices in Newport Beach..As the afternoon waned toward a portentous dusk and toward the gallery reception for Celestina White, Junior prepared his knives and guns..Sunday, Junior hid out from Scamp, using his Ansaphone to screen her calls, and worked with such astonishing focus on his needlepoint pillows that he forgot to go to bed that night. He fell asleep over his needles at ten o'clock Monday morning..Lowering his surgical mask, Dr. Lipscomb approached Celestina, where she stood with her back pressed to the wall..FOR AMERICANS OF Chinese descent-and San Francisco has a large Chinese population-1965 was the Year of the Snake. For Junior Cain, it was the Year of the Gun, though it didn't start out that way..The funeral was at two o'clock, after which family and friends of the deceased would gather here in the parsonage for a social, to break bread together and to share their memories of the loved one lost.. "Did he say I'd met him?" Jacob asked, squinting past Edom toward the bright sunlight at the open door..JUNIOR CAIN WANDERED among the Philistines, in the gray land of conformity, seeking one-just one-refreshingly repellent canvas, finding only images that welcomed and even charmed, yearning for real art and the vicious emotional whirlpool of despair and disgust that it evoked, finding instead only themes of uplift and images of hope, surrounded by people who seemed to like everything from the paintings to the canapes to the cold January night, people who probably hadn't spent even one day of their lives brooding about the inevitability of nuclear annihilation before the end of this decade, people who smiled too much to be genuine intellectuals, and he felt more alone and threatened than eyeless Samson chained in Gaza.. "She. Was eating. Dried apricots." Junior spoke almost in a whisper yet the ridge was so quiet that he had no doubt each of these uniformed but unofficial jurors heard him clearly. "Walking. Around the deck. Paused. The view. She. She. She leaned. Gone..".Onto its roof now, the Pontiac spun as it slid, grinding loudly against the blacktop, and regardless of how determinedly Agnes held on, she was being pulled out of her seat, toward the inverted ceiling and also backward. Her forehead knocked hard into the thin overhead padding, and her back wrenched against the headrest.. "They've gone to bed. They're tired," Wally told her as he put the car in gear and released the hand brake. "Aren't you?" Angel. A less exotic synonym for her own name. Seraphim's angel. The angel of an angel..He was nearly forty years old, and a life spent fearing nature could not be turned easily into a romance with her. Some nights he still stared at the ceiling, unable to sleep, waiting for the Big One, and he avoided walks on the shore in respect of deadly tsunamis. From time to time, he visited his brother's grave and sat on the grass by the headstone, reciting aloud the gruesome details of deadly storms and catastrophic geological events, but he found that he had also absorbed from Jacob some of the statistics related to serial killers and to the disastrous failures of manmade structures and machines. These visits were pleasantly nostalgic. But he always came with roses, too, and brought news of Barty, Angel, and other members of the family. When Paul sold his house to move in with Agnes, Tom Vanadium settled into Jacob's former apartment, now a fully retired cop but not yet ready to return to a life of the cloth. He assumed the management chores of the family's expanding community work, and he oversaw the establishment of a tax-advantaged charitable foundation. Agnes provided a list of fine-sounding and self-effacing names for this organization, but a majority vote rejected all her suggestions and, in spite of her embarrassment, settled on Pie Lady Services..Tom didn't attribute supernatural powers to this killer. Enoch Cain was mortal, not all-seeing and all-knowing. Evil and stupidity often go together, however, and arrogance is the offspring of their marriage, as Tom had earlier told Celestina. An arrogant man, not half as smart as he thinks, with no sense of right and wrong, with no capacity for remorse, can sometimes be so breathtakingly reckless that, ironically, his recklessness becomes his greatest strength. Because he is capable of anything, of taking risks that mere madmen wouldn't consider, his adversaries can never predict his actions, and surprise serves him well. If he also possesses animal cunning, a kind of deep intuitional shrewdness, he can react quickly to the negative consequences of his recklessness and can indeed appear to be more than human..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..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.. "Who else? I think there's romance in the air. The cow-eyed way he looks at her, she could knock his knees out from under him just by giving him a wink..".Teasing out the card, Edom saw that it was an ace of diamonds-remarkable in light of Maria Gonzalezs fortune-telling session last Friday evening. He was more astonished, however, by the name printed in black ink diagonally across the face of the card: BARTHOLOMEW..She moved beside him. "For one minute, after her heart stopped the first time, she wasn't here in St. Mary's, was she? Her body, yes, that was still here, but not Phimie..".Not many men wore hats these days. Since his teenage years, Nolly had favored a porkpie model. San Francisco was often chilly, and he began losing his hair when still young..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. The aging, fugitive Nazi had been replaced at the front desk by a woman with messily chopped blond hair, a brutish face, and arms that would dissuade Charles Atlas from challenging her. She changed a five-dollar bill into coins for the vending machines and snarled at him only once in strangely accented English. Nicholas Deed was not the knave. He had already brought all the ruin into their lives that he was going to bring. Turning his patched eyes in the general direction of his mother, Barty said, "Oops." Junior was accustomed to having women seduce him. His good looks were a blessing of nature. His commitment to improving his mind made him interesting. Most important, from the books of Caesar Zedd, he had learned how to be irresistibly charming. "Take care he doesn't turn your belt on you with a spell!" said his uncle. Celestina screamed-"Here! In here!"--as she slapped the magazine into the butt of the pistol. Maria, however, lived comfortably with both the Catholicism and the occultism in which she had been raised. In Hermosillo, Mexico, the latter had been nearly as important to the spiritual life of her family as had been the former. Lifted from his despair by this exhilarating wrath, Junior turned away from the mirror, looking for the bright side once more. Perhaps it was the bathroom window. It could only be made better by the presence of her parents. They had planned to fly down to San Francisco this morning, but late yesterday, a parishioner and close friend had died. A minister and his wife sometimes had duties to the flock that superseded all else. Phimie gazed upon the child briefly, then sought her sister's eyes again. Another word, "I was once doubting Thomas," said the detective, but not from beside the bed any longer. His voice seemed to come from across the room, perhaps near the door, though he had made not a sound as he'd moved. "Well, we have earthquakes here," Jolene said, "but back east they have all those hurricanes." No more than a minute after Vanadium departed, a nurse arrived in a rush, no doubt sent by the hateful cop. Hard to tell, through all the tears, if she was a looker. A nice face, perhaps. But such a stick-thin body. She hadn't looked up from her sketching. Although Junior thought she hadn't seen him, she'd apparently been aware of him all along. In the hall that served the two ground-floor apartments, they encountered Rena Moller, the elderly woman who lived in the unit across from theirs. She was polishing the dark wood of her front door with lemon oil, a sure sign that her son and his family were coming to dinner. "I'll do your share of the housework for a month. If I'm closer to the date, you clean up all my pie-baking and other kitchen messes for a month-the bowls and pans and mixers, everything." "I wasn't drinking," he said. "That's proven. But I admit being reckless, driving too fast in the rain. They cited me for that, for running the light." "Thank you, Dr. Lipscomb. I'll keep track of what you're losing every month, and someday I'll pay it back to you." Celestina dropped to one knee in front of Angel, to tie the drawstrings of the hood under the girl's chin. "When you called earlier in the year, to ask for a referral to a private investigator down there, the woman had recently turned up dead and Vanadium was gone, but no one put the two together at first." Instead of immediately killing anyone, Junior returned to his apartment on the afternoon of December 29, and went to bed, fully clothed. To calm down. To think about focus. Junior could almost feel sorry for this sad, stocky, haunted detective, deranged by years of difficult public service. They laughed and held hands. For the first time since Phimie's panicked phone call from Oregon, Celestina felt that everything would eventually be all right again. The white padded eye patches rebuffed her, and she realized how profoundly the boy's double enucleation would affect how easily she could read his moods and know his mind. Here was a littler loss until now shadowed by the greater destruction. Denied the evidence of his eyes, she would need to be better at noting and interpreting nuances of his body language-also changed by blindness-and his voice, for there would be no soul revealed by hand-painted, plastic implants. Her voice as bright as her bed ensemble, spiritual sister to baby chicks everywhere, yellow Angel raised her head from the pillow and said, "Will you have a wedding?" This was not the time to ponder the nature of the relationship between the treacherous Miss Bressler and Vanadium. Junior had a bloody trail to cover, and precious time was ticking away. Into Barty's darkness came light that he had not sought. He saw his smiling Mary on his lap as she lowered her hands from his temples, saw the faces of his family, the table set with Christmas decorations and many candles flickering. In the time of the kings, mages gathered in the court of Enlad and later in the court of Havnor to counsel the king and take counsel together, using their arts to pursue goals they agreed were good. But in the dark years, wizards sold their skills to the highest bidder, pitting their powers one against the other in duels and combats of sorcery, careless of the evils they did, or worse than careless. Plagues and famines, the failure of springs of water, summers with no rain and years with no summer, the birth of sickly and monstrous young to sheep and cattle, the birth of sickly and monstrous children to the people of the isles-all these things were charged to the practices of wizards and witches, and all too often rightly so. EDOM carried the honey-raisin pear pie, and Agnes toted Barty across the neatly cropped yard, to the front door. The bell push triggered chimes that played the first ten notes of "That Old Black Magic," which they heard distinctly through the glass in the door. Nolly shrugged. "He can't know for sure. And anyway, he didn't get the pushed idea until he'd already taken the case." His conscience as a craftsman would not let him fault the carpentry of the ship in any way; but his conscience as a wizard told him he could put a hex on her, a curse woven right into her beams and hull. Surely that was using the secret art to a good end? For harm, yes, but only to harm the harmful. He did not talk to his teachers about it. If he was doing wrong, it was none of their fault and they would know nothing about it. He thought about it for a long time, working out how to do it, making the spell very carefully. It was the reversal of a finding charm: a losing charm, he called it to himself. The ship would float, and handle well, and steer, but she would never steer quite true. Fathoms of silence flooded the line. Still, she listened. He sensed her there, though as if at a great depth. The busboy swept the empty appetizer plates away as the waiter arrived simultaneously with small salads. Fresh martinis followed. Kathleen expected this would prove to be true. She herself was not frightened by Thomas Vanadium's appearance; but

then she had been prepared for it before she first saw him. And she wasn't a murderer, fearful of retribution, to whom this particular face would seem like Judgment personified..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..Edom had noticed them earlier. Now he saw they were in worse condition than he'd thought. Enlarged knuckles, fingers not entirely at natural angles to one another. Perhaps Obadiah had rheumatoid arthritis, like Bill Kleifton, though a less crippling case..Celestina put Angel down, and the girl raced to the bathroom as Wally stepped into the public hall and pulled the apartment door shut behind him.."You're all right, we've got you now." His soft yet reverberant voice was so unearthly that his words seemed to convey an assurance more profound and more comforting than their surface meaning..Sitting on a stool at the counter, he ordered a cheeseburger, coleslaw, french fries, and a cherry Coke..When the convulsive seizure passed, as he collapsed back on the spattered pillow, shuddering at the stench rising from his hideously fouled clothes, Junior was suddenly struck by an idea that was either.Knacker, Hisscus, and Nork, all talking at once, then failing silent as if they were a single organism, then talking in rotation but interrupting one another, tried to advance their agenda..So runs the water away, away,.Edom complied, and in the arc of red Bicycle patterns, one card revealed too much white comer, because it was the only one face up..Indeed, the tree inspired him. After he shot the girl, he would open the window and toss her body into the oak Let Celestina find her there, randomly pierced by branches in a freestyle crucifixion.."Even when I was a young boy," Tom continued, "the world felt a lot different to me from the way it looked to other people. I don't mean I was smarter. I've got maybe a little better than average IQ, but nothing I could brag about. Flunked geography twice and history once. No one would ever confuse me and Einstein. It's just, I felt ... such complexity and mystery that other people didn't appreciate, such layered beauty, layers upon layers like phyllo pastry, each new layer more amazing than the last. I can't explain it to you without sounding like a holy fool, but even as a boy, I wanted to serve the God who had created so much wonder, regardless of how strange and perhaps even beyond all understanding He might be."."This will stay with you," Mary said. "It's shared sight from all the other yous in all the other places, but you won't have to make any effort to hold on to it. No headaches. No problems ever. Merry Christmas, Daddy."..Not all of the pins were knocked to the shear line with a single pull of the trigger. Three pulls were the minimum required, sometimes as many as six, depending on the lock..Tom was alone. The place should be silent. Hanna Rey, the housekeeper, wasn't scheduled to arrive until ten o'clock..In his seventies but vigorous and full of fun, Sparky liked to take an occasional jaunt to Reno, to pump the slot machines and try a few hands of blackjack. The off-the-record, tax-free monthly checks from Simon were gratefully received, ensuring the old man's cooperation with the conspiracy..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..Shortly past nine o'clock, an hour after Edom and Jacob had gone, Barty came downstairs, book in hand. "The twisties are back."

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