

DE BELLO GALLICO LIBRI VII CAESARS GALLIC WAR WITH INTRODUCTION NOTES

"Besides, I still live by my vows as much as possible, though I've had the longest continuing dispensation on record." A smile on that cracked countenance could be touching, but an ironic look now worked less well; it gave Kathleen a chill. "Vanity is a sin I've more easily been able to avoid than some others." In spite of his dumpy appearance-and especially in the dark, where appearances didn't count-Vanadium had the aura of a mystic. Although Junior didn't believe in mystics or in the various unearthly powers they claimed to possess, he knew that mystics who believed in themselves were exceptionally dangerous people..The chest respirator, which Joshua had evidently applied, lay discarded on the bedclothes beside her. She seldom required this apparatus to assist her breathing, and then only at night.."You must be thinking of someone else," she said, pushing a wad of bills into his hand. "Me, I'm a jellyfish in high heels." He had come to believe that every well-rounded, self-improved person ought to have a craft at which he excelled, and needlepoint appealed to him more than either pottery-making or decoupage. For pottery, he would require a potter's wheel and a cumbersome kiln; and decoupage was too messy, with all the glue and lacquer. By December, he began his first project: a small pillowcase featuring a geometric border surrounding a quote from Caesar Zedd, "Humility is for losers." WALLY HAD NOT gone home with Death, but they had definitely been at the dance together..Finally, only thirty miles south of Spruce Hills, he reluctantly acknowledged that slow deep breathing, positive thoughts, high self esteem, and firm resolve weren't sufficient to subdue his treacherous bowels. He needed to find lodging for the night. He didn't care about a swimming pool or a king-size bed, or a free continental breakfast. The only amenity that mattered was indoor plumbing..Music played within. An up-tempo number. Possibly swing. He couldn't quite identify the tune..She poured cold milk and drank it quickly. As she was rinsing the empty glass, she felt as if she might throw up, but she didn't..Blue fire flashed across the top of the range and followed drips down the baked-enamel front to the floor. Blue flared to yellow, and the yellow darkened when the blaze found the cadaver..The sound-suppressor didn't render the pistol entirely silent, but the three soft reports, each like a quiet cough muffled by a hand, wouldn't have carried beyond the hallway..Throughout this procedure, Barty appeared solemn and thoughtful. When he had squeezed the tenth toe, he stared at it, brow furrowed..Studying the brochure, Junior felt that the best response to this artist's work was to go directly into the bathroom, stick one finger down his throat, and purge himself. Considering his medical history, however, he couldn't afford to be such an expressive critic..Now, since he didn't intend to date this woman again, he grabbed the only chance he might ever have to learn the intimate, eccentric details of her life. He began in her kitchen, with the contents of the refrigerator and cupboards, concluding his tour in her bedroom..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..But on March 23, 1966, after a bad date with Frieda Bliss, who collected paintings by Jack Lientery, an important new artist, Junior had an experience that rocked him, added significance to the episode in the diner, and made him wish he hadn't donated his pistol to the police project that melted guns into switchblades.."When the Iroquois Theater in Chicago burned on December 30, 1903" he said aloud, testing his memory, "during a matinee of Mr Blue Beard, six hundred two people perished, mostly women and children." Bartholomew was an uncommon name, however, and logic suggested that if the baby was now called Bartholomew, he'd been named for his adoptive dad. Therefore, a search of the listings might be fruitful..Aside from purchasing the T S. Eliot book, which he hadn't found time to read, Junior was only peripherally aware of current events, because they were, after all, current, while he tried always to focus on the future. The news of the day was but a faint background music to him, like a song on a radio in another apartment..RED SKY IN THE morning, sailors take warning; red sky at night, sailors delight.."What car?" Celestina asked, stopping at the bottom of the steps and turning to look..Lord, help me here. Give me this one, just this one, and I'll follow thereafter where I'm led. I'll always thereafter be your instrument, but please, please, GIVE ME THIS CRAZY EVIL SON OF A BITCH!. Sometimes, while shaving or combing his hair, as he was looking in the bathroom or foyer mirror, Junior thought that he glimpsed a presence, dark and vaporous, less substantial than smoke, standing or moving behind him. At other times, this entity seemed to be within the mirror. He couldn't focus on it, study it, because the moment he became aware of the presence, it was gone.."Well," Kathleen said, "even if the money wasn't so nice, I'd be sorry to see this case end." For a long time, she sat alone in the dark living room, in the armchair that had been Joey's favorite, thinking about many things but returning often to the memory of Barty's dry walk in wet weather..Celestina was better equipped to embrace this transcendental experience for what it appeared to be. She was not one of those artists who celebrated chaos and disorder, or who found inspiration in pessimism and despair. Wherever her eyes came to rest, she saw order, purpose, exquisite design, and either the pale flicker or the fierce blaze of a humbling beauty. She perceived the uncanny not merely in old houses where ghosts were said to roam or in eerie experiences like the one Lipscomb had described, but every day in the pattern of a tree's branches, in the rapturous play of a dog with a tennis ball, in the white whirling currents of a snowstorm-in every aspect of the natural world in

which insoluble mystery was as fundamental a component as light and darkness, as matter and energy, as time and space..He slapped her hands, knocking the sharpener and the pencil out of her grasp. They clattered against the window, fell onto the window-seat cushions..Junior was aware that all the cops were watching him as he stared down at the body, and he frantically tried to think what an innocent husband would be likely to do or say, but his imagination failed him. His thoughts could not be organized..Jolene started to refill his coffee mug-then thought better of it. "Maybe you don't need more caffeine, Edom." Otter was reluctant to answer. He had to like Hound, but didn't have to trust him. "Shape-changing," he mumbled at last..The pubescent physician returned with three colleagues, who crowded behind the privacy curtain to proclaim that none of them had ever seen any case remotely like this before. The oldest-a myopic, balding lump-insisted on asking Junior probing questions about his marital status, his family relationships, his dreams, and his self-esteem; the guy proved to be a clinical psychiatrist who speculated openly about the possibility of a psychosomatic component.. "Yes. In syrup form. It's a good item for your home medicine chest, in case your child ever swallows poison and you need to purge it from him quickly." From his early adolescence, Edom was drawn to gardening, taking special pleasure in the cultivation of hybrid roses. He'd been only sixteen when one of his blooms earned first place in a flower show. When his father learned about the competition, he regarded Edom's pursuit of the prize as a grievous sin of pride. The punishment left Edom bedridden for three days, and when he came downstairs at last, he discovered that his father had torn out all the rose bushes..The dying-dove hands fluttered down Junior's arms, plucking feebly at his leather coat, and at last hung limp at Neddy's sides..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..Having survived the night, Edom and Jacob were waiting in the hall. Each kissed his nephew, but neither could speak..Jacob was hiding something. Until he had spoken of Josef Krepp, his every response had been formed as a question, which had always been his preferred method of avoidance when conversation involved a subject that made him uncomfortable..As impressed as Agnes had been with the sample orbs that she'd been shown, she allowed no hope that the singular beauty of Barty's striated emerald-sapphire eyes would be re-created. Although the artist's work might be exquisite, these irises would be painted by human hands, not by God's..This surprised him. Of course, Oregon was not the Deep South. It was a progressive state. Nevertheless, he was surprised. Oregon wasn't home to many Negroes, either, a handful compared to those in other states, and yet until now Junior supposed that they had their own cemeteries.."It's even worse," Junior rasped, convinced that he was losing some indefinable advantage if the cop left without playing out this moment as it would usually unfold in an intellectual television crime drama like Perry Mason or Peter Gunn..Angel followed him at two steps, and when she stood beside his chair, watching him open the soft drink, Barty said, "Why were you following me?" Junior was disturbed that the mysterious chanteuse had been performing when he wasn't home. He felt violated. Invaded..thickened with the odors of antiseptics and blood, until breathing required an effort..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.."You're better at concentrative meditation without seed than anyone I've ever known, better than me. That's why you, especially, should never undertake a long session unsupervised," Chicane scolded. "At the very least, the very least, you should use your electronic meditation timer. I don't see it here, do I?" Through the big window beyond her, the charry branches of the massive oak tree formed a black cat's cradle against the sky, leaves quivering slightly, as though nature herself trembled in trepidation of what Junior Cain might do..Eventually, of course, dear Edom held forth about tornadoes--in particular the infamous Tri-State Tornado of 1925, which ravaged portions of Missouri, Illinois, and Indiana.."Will I love you tomorrow, you mean, and the day after tomorrow, and on forever? Of course, forever, Wally, always." 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..Worried that tears would frighten Barty, that indulging in a few would result in a ruinous flood, Agnes held back the salt tides. A mother's duty proved to be the stuff from which dams were built..Although he was a stranger, arriving unannounced, and something of an eccentric by anyone's definition, Paul was received by Grace and Harrison White with warmth and fellowship. At their doorstep, raising his voice to compete with the wailing weather, he hurriedly blurted out his mission, as if they might reel back from his wild windblown presence if he didn't talk quickly enough: "I've walked here from Bright Beach, California, to tell you about an exceptional woman whose life will echo through the lives of countless others long after she's gone. Her husband died the night their son was born, but not before naming the boy Bartholomew, because he'd been so impressed by 'This Momentous Day. And now the boy is blind, and I hope you'll be able and willing to give some comfort to his mother." The Whites failed to reel backward, didn't even flinch from his unfortunately explosive statement of purpose. Instead, they invited him into their home, later invited him to dinner, and later still asked him to stay the night in their guest room..Remember the beauty of rage. Channel the anger and be a winner. Act now, think later.."Yours is a harder job than mine," Lipscomb told Grace, dandling Angel as he spoke. "I have no doubt of that." Maybe the watch wouldn't be discovered with the corpse. Maybe it would settle into the trash and not be found until archaeologists dug out the landfill two thousand years from now.."From 1604 through 1610,

Erzebet Bathory, sister of the Polish king, with the assistance of her servants, tortured and killed six hundred girls. She bit them, drank their blood, tore their faces off with tongs, mutilated their private parts, and mocked their screams." "Maybe I won't have to try as hard as I think, because you make it so easy, Barty." As the unwanted change pinged against the concrete at his feet, Junior-snap, snap-saw the source of the next two rounds. They spat out of the vertical pay slot on a newspaper-vending machine; one hit his nose, and the other rang off his teeth. The guy was carrying a purse, whatever that meant, and when he walked through the door, he had a goofy look on his face, but his expression changed when he saw Junior. She was so hot that the ice melted quickly. A thin trickle slid down her throat, but not enough to take the Sahara out of her voice when she said, "More." He gently drew the covers over his wife's ruined body, to her thin shoulders, but arranged her right arm on top of the blankets. He straightened and smoothed the folded-back flap of the top sheet. Looking from one to another of his companions, Tom said, "When I think of everything that had to happen to bring us here tonight, the tragedies as well as the happy turns of fortune, when I think of the many ways things might have been, with all of us scattered and some of us never having met, I know we belong here, for we've arrived against all odds." His gaze traveled back to Agnes, and he gave her the answer that he knew she hoped to hear. "This boy and this girl were born to meet, for reasons only time will reveal, and all of us ... we're the instruments of some strange destiny." The moment that the roof of the car vanished beneath the water, Junior hurried away, retracing on foot the route he had driven. He didn't have to go all the way back to Vanadium's place, only to the dark house where he'd left Victoria Bressler. He had a date with a dead woman. Dr. Daines spoke with Celestina in the corridor, outside the door to 724. Some of the passing nurses were nuns in wimples and full-length habits, drifting like spirits along the hallway. Edom and Jacob flanked the gurney, each gripping one of Barty's feet through the sheet that covered them, escorting him with the same stony determination that you saw on the faces of the Secret Service agents who bracketed the President of the United States. Junior wasn't interested in Vietnam anymore, and he wasn't in the least troubled by the other news. These two years were disturbing to him only because of Thomas Vanadium. "Ah, evidently you can read my mind. Scarier than heart reading any day. Maybe there's a thin line between minister's daughter and witch." Thrilled to have inspired this awe in her, he closed the book. "Remember what we talked about a long time ago? You asked me how come, if I could walk where the rain wasn't. . . ."

"Nonsense," Agnes breezed on, "it's no imposition. You'll be a great help with my baking, the pie deliveries, all the work that I put aside during Barty's surgery and recovery. It'll either be fun, or I'll wear you down to the bone, but either way, you won't be bored. I've got two extra rooms. One for Celie and Angel, and one for Grace. When your Wally arrives, we can move Angel in with Grace, or she can bunk with me." Startled, Nolly checked his shirt pocket and withdrew a quarter. "It's not the same one." "Whatever you're paying here, that's what you'll pay for the new place," Lipscomb said. There in more genteel and gilded ages, and her flights of imagination sometimes acquired such vivid detail that they were eerily like memories. Junior would have liked to pursue spiritual matters with Sklent, but numerous other partyers wanted their time with the great man. In parting, sure that he would give the artist a laugh, Junior withdrew the brochure for "This Momentous Day" from his jacket and coyly asked for an opinion of Celestina White's paintings. Ordinarily, she would have returned to the first of the candles and offered a second fragment to Saint Peter. In this case, however, she entrusted it to the least known of the apostles, because she was sure that he must have special significance in this matter. Excessive insurance, Agnes believed, was a temptation to fate. "A reasonable policy, yes, that's fine. But a big one ... it's like betting on death." Celestina hardly knew Paul, and although he'd saved her mother's life, his offer raised a look of doubt from her. 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 knaves. 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. Grace dropped the phone. Harrison let the frosting knife slip out of his fingers. As a recreational site, Quarry Lake could be judged only a partial success. During the mining operation, trees were cleared well back from the edge of the dig, so that much of the shore would be unshaded on a hot summer day. And along half the strand, signs were posted warning Ungraded Shore: Immediate Deep Water. In places, where lake met land, the bottom lay over a hundred feet below. 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. Off with the cap. Yellow capsules in the bottle, also blue. He managed to shake one of each color into the palm of his left hand without spilling the rest on the floor. For Junior, 1968--the Chinese Year of the Monkey--would be the Year of the Plastic Surgeon. He would require extensive dermabrasion to restore the smoothness and tone to his skin, to be as irresistibly kissable as he had been before. While at it, he would need surgery to make subtle changes in his features. Tricky. He didn't want to trade perfection for anonymity. He must take care to ensure that his postsurgery look, when he let his hair grow in and perhaps dyed it, would be as devastating to women as his previous appearance. He had nothing against Negroes. He didn't wish them ill. He wasn't prejudiced. Live and let live. He believed that as long as they stayed with their own kind and abided by the rules of a polite society, like everyone else, they had a right to live in peace. 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. In the minister's house,

Junior had seen no indications of a sister. No family photos, no high-school graduation portrait proudly framed. Of course, he had not been interested in their family, for he had been all-consumed by Seraphim..On a positive note, the apartment was heated by a gas furnace. A leak, a spark, an explosion, and he would never have to see poor Agnes in her misery..Celestina said, "Phimie wasn't a mind reader. That's science fiction, Dr. Lipscomb.".Visibly nonplussed by Junior's blithe failure to terminate the handshake when the shaking stopped, the fussy Neddy didn't want to be so rude as to yank his hand loose, or to cause a scene regardless of how small, but Junior, smiling and pretending to be as socially dense as concrete, failed to respond to a polite tug. So Neddy waited, allowing his hand to be held, and his face, previously as white as piano keys, brightened to a shade of pink that clashed with his red boutonniere..Celestina stood listening until she heard Wally open the outer door and then close it..Beveled, crackled, distorted, divided into petals and leaves, Deed's face beyond the lead-ad glass, as he leaned closer to try to peer inside, was the countenance of a dream demon swimming up out of a nightmare lake.."Enough," said the nurse, and the nun reached through clouds of steam to crank off the water..Junior felt unspeakably violated. This was outrageous: the inarguably personal, very private contents of his stomach, scooped into a plastic evidence bag, without his permission, without even his knowledge..Barty came out of the house with the library copy of Podkayne Of Mary, which his mother had promised to read to him later, in the hospital. "Are we all going?" he asked.."The quarter in the sandwich," Nolly said, because that was the first stunt that Simon Magusson had paid him to perform..The doors were unlocked on a pickup parked next to the Pontiac. Junior lifted the granny onto the front seat of the truck. She was so light, so unpleasantly angular, and she rustled so much that she might have been a new species of giant mutant insect that mimicked human appearance. He was glad, after all, that he hadn't killed her: Granny's prickly--bur spirit might have proved to be as difficult to eradicate as a cockroach infestation. With a shudder, he tossed her purse on top of her, and slammed the truck door..She struggled, wept, pretended disgust, faked shame, swore to bring the police down on him. Another man, not as highly skilled at reading men as Junior, might have thought the girl's resistance was genuine, Sat her charges of rape were sincere. Any other man might have backed off, but Junior was neither fooled nor confused..To his room then, where they sat side by side in bed, a plate of chocolate-chip cookies between them. Through the evening, they stepped off this earth and out of all its troubles, into a world of adventure, where friendship and loyalty and courage and honor could deal with any malignancy..Later, at home in bed, after Nolly proved the value of oysters, he and Kathleen lay holding hands. Following a companionable silence, he said, "It's a mystery..".At the top of the candlestick, the drip pan and the socket were marked by a wine-red drizzle. The color of well-aged bloodstains..When he dared to look in the mirror above the sink, he expected to see a haggard face, sunken eyes, but the grim experience had left no visible mark. He quickly combed his hair. Indeed, he looked so fine that women would as usual caress him with their yearning gazes when he made his way back through the gallery..Lipscomb women gladly obey the wishes of Lipscomb men-unless they disagree, of course, or don't disagree but are just feeling mulish..Mary Lampion, little light, was home-schooled as her father and mother had been. But she didn't study just reading, writing, and arithmetic. Gradually she developed a range of fascinating talents not taught in any school, and she went exploring in a great number of the many ways things are, journeying to worlds right here but unseen..WITH BRIGHT BEACH under assault by one miserable flu and by an uncountable variety of common colds, business was brisk this Monday at Damascus Pharmacy..Leavening his tortured voice as best he could with shock and hurt, as though deeply wounded by the need to speak these words, Junior Cain said, "You ... you think I killed her, don't you? That's crazy..".And there are songs, old lays and ballads from small islands and from the quiet uplands of Havnor, that tell the story of those years..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..Action. just concentrate on action and ignore the disgusting aftermath. Remember the runaway train and the bus full of nuns stuck on the tracks. Stay with the train, don't go back to look at the smashed nuns, just keep moving forward, and everything will be all right..Cypresses lined the entry drive to the cemetery. Tall and solemn, the trees kept guard, as though posted to prevent restless spirits from roaming out into the land of the living..This was his door, however, not hers. She did not possess a ticket to ride the train that had come for him. He boarded, and the train was gone, and with it the light in his eyes. She lowered her mouth to his, kissing him one last time, and taste of his blood was not bitter, but sacred..Eye to eye with Tom, Celestina herself did some clear-seeing. "You're special, too, in lots of obvious ways. But like Angel, you're special in some secret way ... aren't you?""I don't want an attorney." He closed his eyes, lowered his head to the pillow, and sighed. "I just want ... peace..". "Stop it, stop it! " Agnes, only ten years old, slender and shaking, but wild with righteousness, until now held in thrall by her own fear, by the memory of all the beatings that she herself has taken. She screams at their father and strikes him with a book she's brought from the house. The Bible. She strikes their father with the Bible, from which he's read to them every night of their lives. He drops the roses, tears the holy book out of Agnes's hands, and pitches it across the yard. He rakes up a handful of the scattered roses, intending to make his son resume this dinner of sin, but here comes Agnes once more, the Bible recovered, brandishing it at him, and now she says what all of them know to be true but what none of them has ever dared say, what even Agnes herself will never again dare to say after this day, not while the old man lives, but she dares to say it now, holding the Bible toward him, so he can see the gold-embossed cross upon the imitation-leather cover. "Murderer," Agnes says. "Murderer " And Edom knows that they're all as good as dead now, that their father will slaughter them right here, right this minute, in his rage. "Murderer," she says accusingly, behind the shield of the Bible, and she doesn't mean that he is killing Edom, but that he killed their mother, that they heard him in the night, three years before, heard the short but awful struggle, and know that what happened was no accident. Roses fall from his skinned and pierced

hands, a flurry of petals yellow and petals red. He rises and takes a step toward Agnes, his dripping fists crimson with his blood and with Edom's. Agnes doesn't back away, but thrusts the book toward him, and scintillant sunlight caresses the cross. Instead of tearing the book out of her hands again, their father stalks away, into the house, surely to return with club or cleaver ... yet they will see no more of him this day. Then Agnes-with tweezers for the thorns, with a basin full of warm water and a washcloth, with iodine and Neosporin and bandages-kneels beside him in the yard. Jacob, too, comes forth from the dark crawlspace under the porch, having watched in terror from behind the latticework skirt. He is shaking, crying, flushed with embarrassment because he didn't intervene, although he was wise to hide, for the disciplinary beating of one twin usually leads to the pointless beating of the other. Agnes gradually settles Jacob by involving him in the treatment of his brother's wounds, and to Edom she says, often thereafter, "I love your roses, Edom. I love your roses. God loves your roses, Edom." Overhead, agitated wings quiet to a soft flutter, and the shrieking crows grow silent. The air pools as still and heavy as the water in a hidden lagoon within a secret glade, in the perfect garden of the unfallen.....He was about to lift the body out of the chair when he heard the car in the driveway. He might not have caught the sound of the engine so distinctly and so early if the stereo had not been in the process of changing albums..Another thought: The young gallery employee would remember that Junior had asked after Neddy and had followed him toward the men's room. He would provide a description, and because he was an art connoisseur, therefore visually oriented, he'd most likely provide a good description, and what the police artist drew wouldn't be some cubist vision in the Picasso mode or a blurry impressionistic sketch, but a portrait filled with vivid and realistic detail, like a Norman Rockwell painting, ensuring apprehension.."Did he say I'd met him?" Jacob asked, squinting past Edom toward the bright sunlight at the open door..Reading about child prodigies, Agnes learned that most if not all math whizzes also possessed musical talent. To a lesser but still impressive extent, many young geniuses in the music world were also proficient at math..In the distance, the clang of a trolley-car bell. Hard and clear in spite of the muffling fog..He either detected their well-concealed surprise or assumed they would be curious as to why, in spite of extensive surgery, he still wore this Boris Karloff face..Indeed, she found it difficult to talk with her son in their usual easy way. She heard a stiffness in her voice that she knew would sooner or later be apparent to him..Spinning off the stool, the bun cap in one hand and the mustard dispenser clutched in the other, Junior surveyed the long narrow diner. Looking for the maniac cop. The dead maniac cop. He half expected to see Thomas Vanadium: head crusted in blood, face bashed to pulp, caked in quarry silt, and dripping water as though he'd climbed out of his Studebaker coffin just minutes ago..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 Klepton, though a less crippling case..When Junior complained of severe thirst, Victoria explained that he was to have nothing by mouth until morning. He would be put on a liquid diet for breakfast and lunch. Soft foods might be allowable by dinnertime tomorrow..Grace, proving again the aptness of her name, said the one thing most likely, in time, to bring true peace to Celestina. "Remember Bartholomew." Later, at home, he gargled until he had drained half a bottle of mint-flavored mouthwash, took the longest shower of his life, and then used the other half of the mouthwash..And so Agnes went alone to her bedroom and there, as on so many nights, sought the solace of the rock who was also her lamp, of the lamp who was also her high fortress, of the fortress who was also her shepherd. She asked for mercy, and if mercy was not to be granted, she asked for the wisdom to understand the purpose of her sweet boy's suffering.."It's just ... the last time I saw him, he trapped me in a corner and told this god awful story, far more than I wanted to know, about some British murderer back in the forties, this monstrous man who beat people to death with a hammer, drank their blood, then disposed of their bodies in a vat of acid in his workroom." He shuddered..On the third of June, he found another useless Bartholomew, and on Saturday, the twenty-fifth, two deeply disturbing events occurred. He switched on his kitchen radio only to discover that "Paperback Writer," yet another Beatles song, had climbed to the top of the charts, and he received a call from a ea woman..Adding new growth to his forest of frustration, Tom got up from the study desk, fetched the newspaper from the front doorstep, and went to the kitchen to make his morning coffee. He boiled up a pot of strong brew and sat down at the knotty-pine table with a steaming mug full of black and sugarless solace.

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