

AMERICAN LITERATURE IN TRANSITION AMERICAN LITERATURE IN TRANSITION 1940

A new quarry, operated by the same company, lay a mile farther north. This was the old one, abandoned after decades of cutting. Assisted by Edom and Jacob, Agnes-in a wheelchair-was rolled across the grass, between the headstones, to her husband's final resting place. Although no longer in danger of renewed hemorrhaging, she was under doctor's orders to avoid strain. And suddenly Celestina believed that Bellini was a cop, not because his voice contained such authority, but because her heart told her that the time had come, that the long-anticipated danger had at last materialized: the dark advent that Phimie had warned her about three years ago. "I ALWAYS EAT CAV-EE-JAR FOR BREAKFAST," said Velveeta Cheese in her stuffed-bear voice. The lack of offensive odors indicated that he hadn't landed in a container filled with organic garbage. In the blackness, judging only by feel, he decided that almost everything was in plastic trash bags, the contents of which were relatively soft-probably paper refuse. Griskin, a former convict, had served eleven years for second-degree murder before the lobbying efforts of a coalition of artists and writers had won his parole. He possessed a huge talent. No one before Griskin had ever managed to express this degree of violence and rage in the medium of bronze, and Junior had long kept the artist's work on his short list of desired acquisitions. "September 27, 1962. Barcelona, Spain. A flood killed four hundred forty-five people." Shaking off this peculiar case of the spooks, Barty proceeded toward the stairs. Just when he reached the newel post, he heard the faint creak of the marker floorboard behind him. He might have felt properly foolish if he had not suffered so much personal experience of Enoch Cain. This was a false alarm, but considering the nature of the enemy, it wasn't a bad idea to put himself through a drill from time to time. 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." "By law, adoption records are sealed and so closely guarded that you'd have an easier time acquiring a complete roster of the CIA's deep cover agents worldwide than finding this one baby." This time, even San Francisco, under a Chinese-blue sky stippled with a cloisonne of silver-and-gold clouds, couldn't provide solace or calm Celestina's nerves. Her sister's dilemma wasn't as easily put out of mind as any problem of her own might have been-and she herself had never been in such an awful situation as Phimie was now. Joey was standing just outside, gazing in at her. His blue eyes were seas where sorrow sailed. Neither hesitantly nor recklessly, the boy set off across the lawn toward the porch steps. He maintained a far straighter line than Agnes would have been able to keep with her eyes closed. He considered calling her, but he didn't know what he would say if she answered. Nolly, Kathleen, and Sparky had prepared him for Industrial Woman, but when the flashlight beam flared off her fork-and-fan-blade face, Vanadium twitched in fright. Without fully realizing what he was doing, he crossed himself. The station wagon rolled out, the Volkswagen bus followed it, and Wally brought up the rear. "Wagons, ho!" he announced. The morning that it happened, Barty ate breakfast in the Lampion kitchen with Angel, Uncle Jacob, and two brainless friends. Nolly adored her laugh, so musical and girlish. He would have made all sorts of a fool out of himself, anytime, just to hear it. Agnes, Celestina, and Grace were soon working together with a harmony that was kitchen poetry. Paul had noticed that most women seemed to like or dislike one another within a minute of their first encounter, and when they found one another companionable, they were as open and easy on their first meeting as though they were friends of long duration. Within half an hour, these three sounded as if they were of one age, inseparable since childhood. He had not seen Grace or Celestina free of despair since the reverend's murder, but here they were able for the first time to veil their anguish in the bustle of baking and the pleasure of making a new friend. Edom and Jacob came to the house, asking what Dr. Chan had said, and Agnes lied to them. "There are some test results we won't have until Monday, but he thinks Barty is going to be all right." According to Helen, more than half the paintings had been sold by the close of the reception, a record for the gallery. With the exhibition scheduled to run two fall weeks, she was confident that they would enjoy a sellout or the next thing to it. From the floor, Junior snatched up the bottle of wine that had twice failed to shatter. His lucky Merlot. Since discovering the quarter in his cheeseburger, Junior had been half convinced that the maniac cop survived the bludgeoning. In spite of his grievous wounds, perhaps Vanadium had swum up through a hundred feet of murky water, barely avoiding being drowned. A pathologically suspicious cop, aware of Junior's acute emesis following Naomi's death, might imagine a connection between this epic bout of diarrhea and Victoria's murder, and Vanadium's disappearance. Here was an avenue of speculation that he did not want to encourage. could not be a person of the best intentions. Doctors and nurses wouldn't monitor their patients with the lights off. Professing befuddlement, the galerieur led the way through three rooms to the front windows, gliding across the polished maple floors as though he were on wheels. The operator attempted to calm him, but he remained hysterical. Between gasps and sharp squeals of pretended pain, he shakily rattled off his name, address, and phone number. Hound told his master that they had the hexer in a safe place, and Losen said, "Who was he working for?" The rocking chair stopped squeaking under her. She heard the sincerity in Vinnie's voice, and as her disbelief dissolved, she was shocked into immobility. She whispered, "My little superstition." After a few racing steps, when the dog realized that Mary hadn't thrown the ball, it whipped around and sprinted back. "That's correct," Parkhurst said. "Probably one or more small blood vessels ruptured from the extreme violence of the emesis." When Victoria failed to answer the door, this man would not simply go away. He had been invited. He was expected. Lights were on in the house. The lack of a response to his knock would be taken as a sign that something was amiss. Setting out after dark, Paul had walked south, following the coastal highway. He was accompanied by the windy rush of passing traffic, but later only by the occasional cry of a blue heron, the whisper of a salty breeze in the shore grass, and the murmur of the surf. Without pushing himself too hard, he reached La Jolla by dawn. The investigator's suite-a minuscule waiting room and a small office-lacked a secretary but surely

harbored all manner of vermin..If blood tests revealed that Junior wasn't the father, Vanadium would have a motive. It wouldn't be the right motive, because Junior truly hadn't known either that his wife was pregnant or that she was possibly screwing around with another man. But the detective would be able to sell it to a prosecutor, and the prosecutor would convince at least a few jurors..Paul shook his head. "Oh, no. People look at our marriage, and they think I gave up so much, but I got back a lot more than I gave.".The three adults exclaimed at the disappearance of the quarter, applauded again, and looked knowingly at Tom's hands, which had closed at the sudden conclusion of all the flourishes..She nodded. And could not lift her gaze from her hands. Could not meet his eyes, afraid that his worry would feed her own, afraid also that the sight of his sympathy would shake loose her perilous grip on her emotions..He had been thankful that during the long trance, he hadn't wet himself. Now he would gladly have accepted any amount of humiliation rather than suffer these vicious cramps..The boy's difference was defined as much by what he didn't do as by what he did. For one thing, he didn't observe the Terrible Twos, the period of toddler rebellion that usually frayed the nerves of the most patient parents. No tantrums for the Pie Lady's son, no bossiness, no crankiness..He knocked the pepper shaker on its side, and then with a groan put it upright once more..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.".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..Barty turned away from her, surveyed the kitchen, and said, "Ah. The twisty is me.". "You should've seen this, Kathleen. He's dodging people on the sidewalk, shoving them out of his way when he can't dodge them. Three long blocks, Jimmy and I watched the creep, till he turned the corner, three long blocks all uphill, and it's a hill that would kill an Olympic athlete, but he doesn't slow down once.".Turning his attention to Barty, Obadiah broke into a smile, revealing a gold upper tooth. "Something here is sweeter than that lovely pie. What's the child's name?".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..The minister's threat had been forgotten, repressed. At the time, only half--heard, merely kinky background to lovemaking, these words had amused Junior, and he'd given no serious thought to their meaning, to the message of retribution contained in them. Now, in this moment of extreme danger, the inflamed boil of repressed memory burst under pressure, and Junior was shocked, stunned, to realize that the minister had put a curse on him!.Shortly past nine o'clock, an hour after Edom and Jacob had gone, Barty came downstairs, book in hand. "The twisties are back.". "Frozen firing pin," Cain said. His smile was venomous. "I worked on it. I hoped you'd get here in time to see the consequences of your stupid games.".At Tom Vanadium's request, the taxi dropped him one block from his new-and temporary-home shortly before ten o'clock in the evening..Junior leaned forward and slid the packet of cash across the desk, toward the detective. "There's more where this came from.".Vanadium was surely unaware of any connection between Junior and Seraphim White. And now the girl could never talk..And now she didn't need him anymore. He gazed at her face, held her cooling hand; his anchor was slipping away from him, leaving him adrift..Junior levered up, scrambled up, vaulted over, and crashed into the deep bin, with every intention of landing on his feet. But he overshot, slammed his shoulder into the back wall of the container, fell to his knees, and sprawled facedown in the trash..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..Now, twenty-four hours later, when Sparky answered his telephone and heard Tom Vanadium, he said, "You looking for a little company? I've got another bottle of Merlot where the last one came from.".Joey rested not under the stern watch of the cypresses, but near a California pepper tree. With its graceful, cascading boughs, it appeared to stand in meditation or in prayer..He was simplifying and combining concepts, but he knew no other way to quickly give them a feel for the wonder, the enigma, the sheer spookiness of the world revealed by quantum mechanics..At worst, Vanadium might begin to wonder if Junior had a link to Seraphim, might uncover the physical-therapy connection, and in his paranoia, might erroneously conclude that Junior had something to do with her traffic accident. That was nuts, of course, but the detective was evidently not a rational man..The upper end of the bed was elevated. Otherwise, Agnes would not have been able to see the room, for she was too weak to raise her head from the pillows.. "If I ever have trots, you'll know." And then in the Cheese voice: "CAN WE LISTEN TO THE BOOK TALK IN YOUR ROOM?".NORTHBOUND ON THE coastal highway, headed for Newport Beach, Agnes saw bad omens, mile after mile..They had a few days for quiet celebration of this astonishing recovery of his sight, and in that time, she never tired of watching him read to her. He didn't think she even listened closely. It was the fact of him made whole that lifted her spirits so high as they were now, not any writer's words nor any story ever written..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..And had Phimie, retrieved from death by the resuscitation procedures of the surgical team, repaid Nella's kindness with her own stunning message to Lipscomb?.For a while, Junior profited enormously from Tammy's investment advice, and the sex was great. As a thank-you for the hefty trading commissions she earned-and not incidentally for all the orgasms-Tammy gave him a Rolex. He didn't mind her four cats, didn't even care when the four grew to six, then to eight..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..Sklent proved to be angry, suspicious, volatile, but also a man of tremendous intellectual power. A profound and dazzling conversationalist, he rattled off breathtaking insights into the human condition, astonishing yet unarguable opinions about art, and revolutionary philosophical concepts. Later, except in the matter of ghosts, Junior would not be able to remember a single word of what Sklent had said, only that it had all been brilliant and really cool..He let go of the girl's chin, and at once she scrunched into the corner of the window seat, as far away from him as she could get. The knowing look in her eye wasn't that of an ordinary child, not that of a child at all. Not his imagination, either. Terror, yes, but also defiance, and this knowing expression, as though she could see right through him, knew things about him that she had no way of knowing..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..Besides, the possibilities repulsed him. The very thought of a splendid-looking woman like Victoria submitting to a grotesque like Vanadium would have withered his soul if he had possessed a soul..Widening his eyes in calculated surprise, Junior said, "Are you a police officer?"..When Bartholomew first said "Kay-jub," and held out one hand toward his uncle, Jacob surprised Agnes by crying with happiness..If not for Celestina's slutty little sister, Bartholomew would not exist. No threat. Junior's life would be different, better..An alley opened on Junior's left. He stepped out of the crowd, into this narrow service way shaded by tall buildings, and walked even more briskly, still not quite running because he continued to believe that he possessed the unshakable calm and self-control of a highly self improved man..So here it came again, the hateful past, returning when Junior thought he was shed of it. This tall, lanky, Celestina-humping son of a bitch, guardian of Bartholomew, had driven away, gone home, but he couldn't stay in the past where he belonged, and he was opening his mouth to say Who are you or maybe to shout an alarm, so Junior shot him three times..Kitchen to dining room, dining room to hallway, keeping his back to the wall, easing quickly along, then into the foyer. Wait here, listening..Phimie must be honored now with laughter instead of with tears, because her life had left Celestina with so many memories of joy and with joy personified in Angel. To fend off tears, she said, "Listen, Clark Kent, we women need our little secrets, our private thoughts. If you can really read my heart this easily, I guess I'm going to have to start wearing lead brassieres."..The 9-mm pistol rested in the complementary shoulder holster, under Junior's leather coat. But the sound-suppressor hadn't been attached; it was in one of his coat pockets. The extended barrel, too long to lay comfortably against his left side, would most likely have hung up on the holster when drawn..NOLLY FELT A little silly, walking the mean streets of North Beach under a white umbrella with red polka dots. It kept him dry, however, and with Nolly, practical considerations always triumphed over matters of image and style..Among Junior's many gifts, his ability to focus might have been the most important. Bob Chicane, his former instructor in matters meditative, had called him intense and even obsessive, following the painful incident involving meditation without seed, but intensity and obsession were false charges. Junior was simply focused.Returning his attention to his own shoes, Jacob said, "So ... what am I supposed to do about this?"..Also in the drawer was a pistol that he kept for home defense. He stared at it, trying to decide whether to go downstairs and make a sandwich or kill himself..Junior had thought most other policemen must consider Vanadium to be a loose cannon, a rogue, an outcast. Perhaps the opposite was true-and if it was, if Vanadium was highly regarded among his peers, he was immeasurably more dangerous than Junior had realized..Junior attended a New Year's Eve party with a nuclear-holocaust theme. Festivities were held in a mansion usually hung with cutting-edge art, but all the paintings had been replaced with poster-size blowups of photos of ruined Nagasaki and Hiroshima.."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..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.."I'm a less philosophical sort than Kathleen," Nolly said, "so what I've been wondering is where you learned the tricks with the quarter. How is it you're priest, cop-and amateur magician?"..His apartment, over the large garage, was reached by a set of exterior stairs. The space was divided into two rooms. The first was a combination living room and kitchenette, with a corner dining table seating two. Beyond was a small bedroom with adjoining bath..As Barty climbed to the porch without benefit of the railing and held out his right hand, Paul Damascus said, "Tom, we're wondering if Barty can extend to you the protection he gives to Angel in the rain. Maybe he can ... since the three of you share this ... this awareness, this insight, or whatever you want to call it. But he won't know until he tries."..When the pianist eventually launched into "Someone to Watch over Me," he didn't appear to be responding to a request, considering that a few other numbers had been played since the most recent gratuity. The tune was, after all, in his nightly repertoire..He felt for the railing. Grasped at the empty air only briefly. Found the handrail. He climbed to the porch..Junior couldn't see the lights of the nearest other houses. Either those structures were screened by trees or the neighbors

weren't home..She lived with her parents then. They had converted the dining room to a bedroom for her..According to his wristwatch, the time was 9:05 in the morning on this momentous day..Needlepoint provided no sanctuary. Junior's hands trembled just badly enough to make accurate stitchery impossible..Barty had awakened able to read. On the page, lines of type no longer twisted under his gaze..A table candle glowed in an amber glass. To Nolly, in this glimmering light, Kathleen's face was more radiant than the flame..He got everything he ordered--full value, and more. When he lifted off the top of the bun to squeeze mustard onto the burger, he discovered a shiny quarter pressed into the half-melted cheese.. "So what I am is I'm your talking eyes." Lowering her hand from his face, Angel said, "Do you know where bacon comes from?" From his first birthday to his third, Barty made worthless all the child-care and child-development books that a first-time mother relied on to know what to expect of her offspring, and when. Barty grew and coped and learned according to his own clock..He supposed Victoria might have a visitor. Perhaps a relative or a girlfriend. Not a man. No. She knew who her man was, and she would have no other while she waited for the chance to surrender to him and to consummate the relationship that had begun with the spoon and the ice in the hospital ten days previously..Either this chatterbox was at all times a babbling airhead or Junior particularly disconcerted him..Mrs. Cain's little boy felt small, weak, sorry for himself, and terribly alone. The detective was still here, but his presence only aggravated Junior's sense of isolation..After mentally reviewing what he must say, after working up a nervous edge, he dialed the SFPD emergency number..Junior poured half the vodka over the corpse, splashed some around other parts of the kitchen, and spilled the last on the cook top, where it trickled toward the active burner. This was not an ideal accelerant, not as effective as gasoline, but by the time he threw the bottle aside, the spirits found the flame..To the right first. Kick the door open, simultaneously firing two rounds, because maybe this was her bedroom, where she kept a gun. Mirrors shattered: a tintinnabulation of falling glass on porcelain, glass on ceramic tile, a lot more noise than the shots themselves..And in time, the surgeon did appear, bearing the good news that neither of the malignancies had spread to the orbit and optic nerve, but he had no greater miracle to report..When Agnes crunched the ice, the nurse said, "No, no. Don't swallow it all at once. Let it melt." Maria's mother, visiting from Mexico, was babysitting, so Maria came without her children, as a guest, joining Agnes and the laugh-a-minute Isaacson twins, chroniclers of destruction. They ate in the dining room, rather than at the kitchen dinette, with a lace-trimmed tablecloth, the good china, crystal wineglasses, and fresh flowers..Paul in the guest room again. Sweeping a bedside lamp to the floor, lifting the nightstand..Jacob intended to carry the luggage, and Edom announced that he would carry Barty. The boy, however, insisted on making his own way to the house..The silence in this city of the dead was complete. The night lay breathless, stirring not one whisper from the stationed evergreens that stood sentinel over generations of bones..The crazy bitch wielded it with such ferocity that the force of the impact with the floor, rebounding upon her, must have numbed her arms. She stumbled backward, dragging the chair, temporarily unable to lift it.. "No, the more I think about it, the more it feels like this is just kids. Some kids goofing around, that's all. I- guess Vanadium got deeper under my skin than I realized, so when this came up, I couldn't think straight about it." Dense, white, slowly billowing masses of fog rolled through the neighborhood, scented with woodsmoke from numerous fireplaces, as though everything north to the Canadian border were ablaze..Nothing he could do about it now. Having Naomi's body moved to another grave, in a cemetery without Negroes, would cause a lot of talk. He didn't want to draw more attention to himself..Even the Shantung-softened lamplight blazed too bright and did not serve her well, so she switched it off and said, "Scoot over." Fear clotted in Junior's veins, and he stood like an impacted embolism in the busy flow of pedestrians, certain that he himself would at any moment succumb to a stroke..AS GREASY WITH FEAR sweat as a pig on a slaughterhouse ramp, Junior woke from a nightmare that he could not remember. Something *is reaching for him-that's all he could recall, hands clutching at him out of the dark-and then he was awake, wheezing. Night still pressed at the glass beyond the venetian blind. The pharmacy lamp in the corner was aglow, but the chair that had been beside it was no longer there. It had been moved closer to Junior's bed..As woe begone a widower as anyone could expect, Junior spent every night home alone. By Sunday, he'd slept without companionship eight nights since being discharged from the hospital..The wedding reception--big, noisy, and joyous--spread across the three properties without fences. His mother's name was so often mentioned, her presence so strongly felt in all the lives that she had touched, that sometimes it seemed that she was actually there with them..Edom felt uneasy in this kingdom of a strange god. The god that his brother feared was humanity, its dark compulsions, its arrogance. Edom, on the other hand, trembled before Nature, whose wrath was so great that one day she would destroy all things, when the universe collapsed into a super dense nugget of matter the size of a pea..Judging by the sounds Vanadium made, Junior figured that the cop had settled once more into the armchair..With Naomi, sex had been glorious, because they were bonded on multiple levels, all deeper than the mere physical. They had been so close, so emotionally and intellectually entwined, that in making love to her, he'd been making love to himself; and he would never experience a greater intimacy than that..Instead of sitting behind his desk, he settled into the second of two patient chairs, beside her. This, too, indicated bad news..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..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..Too late. The parsonage was fully engulfed. With luck, they would save the church..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..He added verisimilitude to his threats by concluding with a few hard punches where they wouldn't show, in her breasts and belly, and then he, went home to Naomi, to whom he'd been married, at that time, less than five months..The ninth piece was not art,

certainly not a work by Griskin, and could disturb no one half as much as it rattled Junior. Upon a black pedestal stood a pewter candlestick identical to the one that had cracked the skull of Thomas Vanadium and had added dimension to the cop's previously pan-flat face..After carrying the two pieces of luggage to the car in the garage, he returned to the study. He sat at the desk and examined the contents of the drawers, then turned to the file cabinet.. "You'll be out of ICU tomorrow, I bet. You'll have a phone, I'll call. And I'll come soon as I can.".At the conclusion of the ceremony, he relinquished his secondhand sight. He would live in darkness until Easter of 1986, though every minute of the day was brightened by his wife.. "Do you know him? " Edom asked, gazing longingly now at the open door, from which Jacob had turned away. "Obadiah Sepharad? ".He doused the light and crouched motionless in the absolute darkness, leaning against a wall of the dumpster to steady himself, because his feet were planted in slippery layers of fog-dampened plastic trash bags.. "That was five years ago. After more surgeries than I care to remember, I was left with these." He raised his goblin hands again. "There's pain in humid weather, less when it's dry. I can take care of myself, but I'll never be a card mechanic again ... or a magician.". Celestina rose, heart suddenly clumping in her breast, like heavy footsteps hurrying away from an approaching bearer of bad news, but she herself couldn't run, could only stand rooted in her hope-and hear in her mind six versions of a bleak prognosis in the two seconds before the doctor actually spoke.. Harmonizing with Diana Ross, Mary Wilson, and Florence Ballard, he drove to the granite quarry three miles beyond the town limits.. Mechanics have reliably steady hands, yet Jacob's hands shook as he discarded two cards and slowly turned over the ninth draw.. For the first time since walking to La Jolla to meet Jonas Salk, Paul planned a journey with a specific purpose.. Many nights, his sleep wasn't half as restful as he would have wished, for he often dreamed of walking in a wasteland. Sometimes, desert salt flats stretched in all directions, with here and there a monument of weather-gnarled rock, all baking under a merciless sun. Sometimes, the salt was snow, and the monuments of rock were ridges of ice, revealed in the hard glare of a cold sun. Regardless of the landscape, he walked slowly, though he had the desire and the energy to proceed faster. His frustration built until it was so intolerable that he woke, kicking in the tangled sheets, restless and edgy.. In the morning, after their first night together, without either of them suggesting what must be done, Barty and Angel went in silence into the backyard and, together, climbed the oak, to watch the sunrise from its highest bower. Three years later, on Easter Sunday in 1986, the fabled bunny brought them a gift: Angel gave birth to Mary. "It's time for a nice ordinary name in this family," she declared.. Embarrassed, cold, abruptly frightened, she returned to the Old West, where night on the low desert was warm. The campfire flickereded welcomingly. John Wayne put an arm around her and said, "There are no dead husbands or dead babies here," and though he intended only to reassure her, she was overcome by misery until Shirley MacLaine took her aside for some heart-to-heart girl talk. Agnes woke again and was no longer chilled, but feverish. Her lips were cracked, her tongue rough and dry.. "What do you think of the exhibition," Junior asked, taking one step toward the musician, crowding him.. Because drugs foil all efforts at self-improvement, Junior had no use for the cocaine and acid. He didn't dare sell them to recover his money; even five thousand dollars wasn't worth risking arrest. Instead, he gave the pharmaceuticals to a group of young boys playing basketball in a schoolyard, and wished them a Merry Christmas. The twenty-fourth of December began with rain, but the storm moved south soon after dawn. Sunshine tinsel the city, and the streets filled with last-minute holiday shoppers.

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