

LUCY TOM FROM A TO Z

On the drive home, Junior dropped the knife down a storm drain in Larkspur. He tossed the gloves in a Dumpster in Corte Madera. In November, Edom asked Maria Gonzalez to dinner and a movie. Although he was only six years older than Maria, both agreed that this was a date between friends, not really a boy-girl thing. 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. "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." 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. Fed up with them and with this exhibition, Junior half wished that he would again be stricken by violent nervous emesis. Even in his suffering, he would enjoy spraying these insistently appealing canvases with the reeking ejecta of his gut: criticism of the most pungent nature. 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. Celestina, Grace, even Tom himself, had taken extraordinary measures to leave no slightest trail. Those very few authorities who knew how to reach Tom and, through him, the others, were acutely aware that his whereabouts and phone number must be tightly guarded. On Christmas Eve, 1996, the family gathered in the middle of the three houses for dinner. The living-room furniture had been moved aside to the walls, and three tables had been set end to end, the length of the room, to accommodate everyone. 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. Bolting up from the couch—"Mom, are you there?"—she turned to Tom, her face collapsing in a ghastly expression. IMplode To burst inward under pressure. Like the hull of a submarine at too great a depth. Fortunately, he'd kept neither cash nor his checkbook in the suitcase. With Zedd intact, his losses were tolerable. He also concluded arrangements to open an account for Gammoner in a Grand Cayman Island bank and one for Pinchbeck in Switzerland. Perhaps this particular worry was not ordinary maternal concern. If a sixth sense is at work in all of us, then perhaps subconsciously Apes was aware of the tragedy to come: the tumors, the surgery, the blindness. Neither Agnes nor Edom knew of Jacob's great skill with cards. He had been discreet about his apprenticeship with Obadiah, and for almost twenty years, he'd resisted the urge to dazzle his siblings with his expertise. A nuclear-powered sound system blasted out the Doors, Jefferson Airplane, the Mamas and the Papas, Strawberry Alarm Clock, Country Joe and the Fish, the Lovin' Spoonful, Donovan (unfortunately), the Rolling Stones (annoyingly), and the Beatles (infuriatingly). Megatons of music crashed off the brick walls, made the many-paned metal framed windows reverberate like the drumheads in a hard-marching military band, and created simultaneously an exhilarating sense of possibility and a sense of doom, the feeling that Armageddon was coming soon but that it was going to be fun. When Frieda finished retching and passed out in a heap, Junior left her on the floor and immediately set out to explore her rooms. He first eased from aisle to aisle, but soon moved more quickly, convinced that the singer would be found beyond the next turn, and then the next. Was that her trailing shadow he had glimpsed, slipping around the corner ahead of him? Her womanly scent lingering in the air after her passage? Losen, a sea-pirate who called himself King of the Inmost Sea, was then the chief warlord in the city and all the east and south of Havnor. Exacting tribute from that rich domain, he spent it to increase his soldiery and the fleets he sent out to take slaves and plunder from other lands. As Otter's uncle said, he kept the shipwrights busy. They were grateful to have work in a time when men seeking work found only beggary, and rats ran in the courts of Maharion. They did an honest job, Otter's father said, and what the work was used for was none of their concern. buttery sunshine, and emerald-black where the shadows of limbs and leaves overlay it. Fat crows as black as. He looked at the two cards following the four of clubs in the stack. Neither of these was a jack of spades, either, and both were what he anticipated. "Longer to wait between Christmases," she said. "And between birthdays. I'd save a bunch of money on gifts." In the late-afternoon light, on this Christmas Eve, Barty was no ghost, no illusion. Throughout Agnes's thirty-three years, strength had often been demanded of her, but never such strength as was required now to rein in her emotions and to be a rock for Barty. "Don't be scared, honey. I'm here." She took one of his small hands in both of hers. "I'll be waiting. You'll never be without me." The hateful window. The hateful, frozen window. Celestina wrenched on the crank with all of her strength, and felt something give a little, wrenched, but then the crank popped out of the socket and rapped against the sill. Scowling, Joey stared at the floor in puzzlement, shifted his weight from one foot to the other, sighed, turned his attention to the ceiling, and shifted his weight again, for all the world like a trained bear that couldn't quite remember how to perform its next trick. 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. After Agnes read the final words on the final page, Barty was drunk on speculation, chattering about what-might-have-happened-next to these characters that had become his friends. He talked nonstop while changing into his pajamas, while peeing, while brushing his teeth, and Agnes wondered how she would wind him down to sleep. 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. after he is rolled onto his back by his father, now, here, roses by the fistful jammed in his face, crushed and ground. When you construct or reconstruct a world that never existed, a wholly fictional history, the research is of a somewhat different order, but the basic impulse and techniques are much the same. You look at what happens and try to see why it happens, you listen to what the people there tell you and watch what they do, you think about it seriously, and you try

to tell it honestly, so that the story will have weight and make sense..Anyway, the thing that scared her was not the monstrous father of this child. The fearsome thing was the decision that she had made a few minutes ago, in the unused hospital room on the seventh floor..Junior had made a mistake when he smashed the pewter stick into Vanadium's face after the cop was already unconscious. He should have bound the bastard and attempted to revive him for interrogation.. "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....."It's a lot," Angel insisted. "Wally gave me an Oreo, last time I saw him. You like Oreos?" "And you give yourself far too little credit," Salk continued gently. "There's no doubt in my mind that Perri was a hero. But she was married to a hero, as well..Later, when the seven of them were gathered at the dinner table, the adults raised glasses of Chardonnay, the children raised tumblers of Pepsi, and Maria gave the toast. "To Bartholomew, the image of his father, who was the kindest man I've ever known. To my Bonita and my Francesca, who brighten every day. To Edom and Jacob, from who ... from whom I've learned so much that has made me think about the fragility of life and made me realize how precious is every day. And to Agnes, my dearest friend, who has given me, oh, so much, including all these words. God bless us, every one." "I get peed off, and I miss some things terrible. But I'm not sad. And you've got to not be sad, either, 'cause it spoils everything." Agnes was so weary, her eyes so sore and grainy, that even this soft radiance stung. She almost closed her eyes and gave herself to sleep again, that little brother of Death, which was now her only solace. What she saw in the lamplight, however, compelled her attention..He no longer had any reason to follow an exercise regimen. For twenty-three years, he'd needed to maintain good health in order to meet his responsibilities, but all the responsibilities that mattered to him had been lifted from his shoulders..Barty looked at Angel, and Angel looked at Barty, and they dropped to their knees on the grass before their daughter. They were both grinning ... and then their grins stiffened a little.."The doctors," he continued, "needed to repair damage to the left frontal sinus, the sphenoidal sinus, and the sinus cavernous, which had all been partially crushed by that pewter candlestick. Frontal, malar, ethmoid, maxillary, sphenoid, and palatine bones had to be rebuilt to properly contain my right eye, because it sort of ... well, it dangled. That was just for starters, and there was considerable essential dental work, as well. I elected not to have any cosmetic surgery." In either case, printing the name in blood was a ritualistic act, and ritualism of this nature was an unmistakable symptom of a seriously unbalanced mind. Evidently, the wife killer would be easier to crack than expected, because his shell was already badly fractured..In the Suburban with Wally and Grace, as they waited to hit the trail, Celestina said, "He took her to a movie again, Tuesday night." Dr. Chan's manner remained professional, providing the strength that Agnes required, but his pain was evident when his gentle voice softened further: "These tumors are so advanced, we won't know until surgery if the malignancy has spread. We may already be too late. And if we aren't too late, we'll have only a small window of opportunity. A small window. Eight days would entail too much risk." He had already reviewed twenty-four thousand names, finding no Bartholomew, putting red checks beside entries with the initial B instead of a first name. A slip of yellow paper marked his place..Running footsteps, heading toward the ambulance. Apparently Kenny. The second paramedic..Once more crowding his quarry, Junior said, "I'm amazed you'd recognize me, since I haven't been to the lounge often." The Beatles began singing the number-one song, "I Feel Fine," as Junior turned off the county highway and followed the lake road northeast around the oil-black water. They had two titles in the American top five. In disgust, he switched off the radio..Every mother also believes that her baby is smarter than other babies. Sadly, time and the child's choices in life usually require her to adjust her opinion as she never will in the matter of physical beauty..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..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.. "He's a hollow man," Vanadium said. "He believes in nothing. Hollow men are vulnerable to anyone who offers them something that might fill the void and make them feel less empty. So-.dent? You do believe that? Because I don't see ... I don't know how could work with someone who thought I was capable of . . . ".As Junior was about to knock again, the door flew inward, and over Sinatra having fun with "When My Sugar Walks Down the Street," Victoria said, "You're early, I didn't hear your car--" She was speaking as she pulled the door open, and she cut herself off in midsentence When she stepped up to the threshold and saw who stood before her..Not incidentally, the project served as a vehicle by which some older citizens, in financial crisis, could receive money in a way that spared their dignity, gave them hope, and repaired their damaged self esteem. Agnes asked Obadiah to enrich the project by accepting a one year grant to record the story of his life with the help of the head librarian..If Junior was not discreet, and if gossip about the widower Cain and the sexy nurse began to circulate, Vanadium would be on the case again even if it had been closed. The cop was sick, hateful, driven by unknowable inner demons. Although he might for the moment have been reined in by those in higher office, mere gossip of a spicy nature would be excuse enough for him to open the file again, which he'd surely do without informing his superiors..Even Angel, mere wisp of a cherubim, couldn't squeeze through a seven-inch opening..By November 1967, the Father Brown detective stories, written for mystery-loving adults by G. K. Chesterton, thrilled Barty. This series of books would retain a special place in his heart for the rest of his life-as would Robert Heinlein's The Star Beast, which was among his Christmas gifts that year..One worrisome problem: Neddy might be found in the container before it had been hauled away, instead of at the landfill that preferably would serve as his next-to-last resting place. If his body was discovered here, it must be at a distance from any trash bin used by the gallery. The less likely the cops were to connect Neddy to Greenbaum's art-sausage factory, the less likely they also were to connect the murder to Junior..Rising from the chair and approaching the bed, the detective kept turning the quarter without hesitation. "She was a very sweet girl. Very romantic. Her diary's full of rhapsodies about married life, about you. She thought you were the finest man she'd ever known and the perfect husband." ."Would you like a little tea and a piece of crumb cake?" Grace asked as smoothly as if, in The Big Book of Etiquette for Ministers' Wives, this were the preferred response to the announcement of a startling career change..Those words, in a vertiginous spiral, spooled through the memory tapes in Junior's mind, as clear and powerfully affecting-and every bit as alarming-as the memory flash of the ordeal in the Dumpster. He couldn't recall where he'd heard them, who had spoken them, but revelation trembled tantalizingly along the rim of his mind..Thick fog distorted all sense of time and place. At each end of the block, pearly hazes of light marked intersections with main streets but didn't illuminate this narrower passage in between. A few security lamps-bare bulbs under inverted-saucer shades or caged in wire--indicated the delivery entrances of some businesses, but the dense white shrouds veiled and diffused these, as well, until they were no brighter than gaslights.. "You remember things?" the girl asked, her fingertips still pressed lightly to his cheek..of drool. Her eyes rolled, wild with fear, and seemed not to be focused on anything. "That's the roaster tower," said Licky. "Where they cook the cinnabar to get the metal from it. Roasters die in a year or two. Where to, dowser?". Wally-Dr. Walter Lipscomb, who delivered Angel and who became her godfather-never worried when the girl seemed to be developing too slowly, counseling that every child was an individual, with his or her particular learning pace. Wally's double specialty--obstetrics and pediatrics-gave him credibility, of course, but Celestina had worried, anyway..The verdant hills to the east lay like slumbering giants under blankets of winter grass, bright in the morning sun. But when the shadows of clouds sailed off the sea and gathered inland, the slopes darkened to a blackish green, as somber as shrouds, and a landscape that had appeared to be sleeping forms now looked dead and cold.. "Once out of the coma and stabilized for a few weeks, I was transferred to a hospital in Portland, where I had to undergo eleven surgeries." .make a worrywart life-insurance salesman like me seem just as light hearted as a schoolgirl." ."I'll come by at eight o'clock for breakfast," Wally suggested. "We have to set a date." .By mid-March, he had exhausted the possibilities of Bartholomew as a surname. By the time that he shot himself in September, he had combed through the first quarter million listings in the directory in search of those whose first names were Bartholomew.. "That's unusual, too, and I wish the etiology of this disease, which is exceedingly well understood, gave us reason to hope based on the transience of the symptoms ... but it doesn't." .They were married in September of that year, much later than even Grace White's wager date. As Grace's guess had been closer than her daughter's, however, Celestina paid with a month of kitchen duty..He traveled prairies and mountains and valleys, passed fields rich in every imaginable crop, crossed great forests and wide rivers. He walked in fierce storms when thunder crushed the sky and lightning tore it, walked in wind that skinned the bare earth and sheared green tresses from trees, and walked also in sun-scrubbed days as blue and clean as ever there had been in Eden..draftsman? Having never been nudged in that direction, would Cain have followed a different path that took him far from Celestina and Angel?.The busboy swept the empty appetizer plates away as the waiter arrived simultaneously with small salads. Fresh martinis followed.. "Well, it's true," he said, finally turning the key in the proper direction and firing up the engine..Yet for all his love of reading and of music, events suggested that for mathematics he had a still greater aptitude..Weatherworkers used to carry a leather sack in which they said they kept the winds, untying it to let a fair wind loose or to capture a contrary one. Maybe it was only for show, but every weatherworker had a bag, a great long sack or a little pouch..At the end of the famous sermon, Celestina's father had wished to all well-meaning people that into their lives should fall a rain of benign effects from the kind and selfless actions of countless Bartholomews whom they would never meet. And he assures those who are selfish or envious or lacking in compassion, or who in fact

commit acts of great evil, that their deeds will return to them, magnified beyond imagining, for they are at war with the purpose of life. If the spirit of Bartholomew cannot enter their hearts and change them, then it will find them and mete out the terrible judgment they deserve..The popeyed little toad smirked over there on the far side of his pretentious desk..Too much clatter, drawing attention. No leisure for romance now, no chance for a two-sister score. just kill Celestina, kill Bartholomew, and go, go..She removed a temporary cap from the second bicuspid on the lower left side and replaced it with the porcelain cap that had been delivered by the lab that morning..From Christmas through February, he dated a beautiful stock analyst and broker-Tammy Bean-who specialized in finding value in companies that had rewarding relationships with brutal dictators.. "Yes?" the silver-haired eminence replied, wrinkling his nose as though he suspected that this customer would ask if the display pedestal was included in the price.. "I'm Sister Josephina." She slipped Celestina's purse off her shoulder--"You can trust this with me"--"I guess so, but it's not that. I was thinking of something my little girl said."..Less cautious than the typical accountant, perhaps mellow in this season of peace, Prosser opened the door without hesitation..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..He found nothing especially gratifying, switched off the lights, and moved on to the living room. If Cain was coming home, he could glance up from the street and see lights ablaze here, so Vanadium resorted to a small flashlight, always carefully hooding the lens with one hand.. "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."..Frankness and tough talk pleased her, because too many people dealt with her as though her spirit were as frail as her limbs. She laughed with delight-but still refused him..More good American music. The Supremes were Negroes, sure, but Junior was not a bigot. Indeed, he had once made passionate love to a Negro girl..At dawn, he and his mother went down to the sea, to watch the rolling waves filigreed with foam and gilded with the molten gold of morning sun, to see the kiting gulls and to scatter bread that brought the winged multitudes to earth.. "Not so bad, two thousand," Tom heard himself say idiotically. "I mean, compared to nearly four million.".. "Sometimes these sympathetic vibrations are very apparent, but alot of the time, they're so subtle that you can hear them only if you're unusually perceptive."..The two men introduced themselves. The physician was Dr. Jim Parkhurst. His manner was easy and affable, and his soothing voice, either by nature or by calculation, was as healing as balm..Junior didn't find anything to explain her paranoia-though, to his surprise, he discovered six books by Caesar Zedd in her small library. The pages were dog-eared; the text was heavily underlined..ONWARD THROUGH THIS Monday, January 17, this momentous day, when the ending of one thing is the beginning of another..He'd never taken too much from any one game. He was a discreet thief, charming his victims with amusing patter. Because he was so ingratiating and seemed only mildly lucky, no one begrudged him his winnings. Soon, he was more flush than he'd ever been as a magician..Ordinarily, when Celestina was troubled, her art was a perfect sanctuary from all woes. When she was planning, composing, and rendering, time had no meaning for her, and life had no sting..impress the hell out of the hoity-toity types, take their money, and get famous."..Paul Damascus had gotten numerous invitations to dinner. No one thought that he should be alone on this difficult night..Between the one-line description of the baklava and the menu's more effusive words about the walnut mamouls, the suspense became too much, the doubt too insidious, at which point Celestina looked up and said, with more girlish angst in her voice than she had planned "Maybe this isn't the place, maybe it isn't the time, or maybe it's the time but not the place, or the place but not the time, or maybe the time and the place are right but the weather's wrong, I don't know--Oh,." "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.. "That discord sets up lots of other vibrations, some of which will return to you in ways you might expect-and some in ways you could never see coming. Of the things you couldn't have seen coming, I'm the worst."..He met her eyes, but at once shifted his gaze to the porch floor again. "I've come to say ... how sorry I am, how miserably sorry."..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."..Inevitably, man of the arts that he was, his slouching brought him to several galleries. In the window of the fourth, not one of his favorite establishments, he saw an eight-by-ten photograph of Seraphim White..She got out of the cab and stood on the sidewalk in front of the gallery, her legs as shaky as those of a newborn colt..He turned the knob. The door eased inward, but he pushed it open only a fraction of an inch..A shock-haired, bright-eyed woman with a candle bound to her forehead set down her pick to show Otter a little cinnabar in a bucket, brownish red clots and crumbs. Shadows leapt across the earth face at which the miners worked. Old timbers creaked, dirt sifted down. Though the air ran cool through the darkness, the drifts and levels were so low and narrow the miners had to stoop and squeeze their way. In places the ceilings had collapsed. Ladders were shaky. The mine was a terrifying place; yet Otter felt a sense of shelter in it. He was half sorry to go back up into the burning day..He was glad that he'd taken the double dose of antiemetics. In spite of this provocation, his stomach felt as solid and secure as a bank vault..He woke at noon, eyes gummed shut with the effluence of sleep. He felt lousy, but he was in control of himself-and strong enough to fetch his suitcase, which he'd been unable to carry upon arrival..Celestina said, "Phimie wasn't a mind reader. That's science fiction, Dr. Lipscomb.".. "Many claimed Maharion's throne, but none could keep it, and the quarrels of the claimants divided all loyalties. No commonwealth was left and no justice, only the will of the wealthy. Men of noble houses, merchants, and pirates, any who could hire soldiers and wizards called himself a lord, claiming lands and cities as his property. The warlords made those they conquered slaves, and those they hired were in truth slaves, having only their masters to safeguard them from rival warlords seizing the lands, and sea-pirates raiding the ports, and bands and hordes of lawless, miserable men dispossessed of their living, driven by hunger to raid and rob."..Standing over the body, he squeezed off the last

three shots. Finished, he detested guns more than ever..Head lowered, as if his visit to Jacob were a weight that bowed him, his attention was on the ground. Otherwise, he might not have noticed, might not have been halted by, the intricate and beautiful pattern of sunlight and shadow over which he walked..In the front seat, Edom and Jacob murmured agreement with the narrator's sentiments. Monday night, Edom and Jacob booked adjoining units in a motel near the hospital. They called Barty's room to give Agnes the phone number and to report that they had inspected eighteen establishments before finding one that seemed comparatively safe..Truly, the time spent helping Agnes had given her uncountable new subjects for paintings and had begun to bring to her work a new depth that excited her. "When you pour out your pockets into the pockets of others," Agnes had once said, "you just wind up richer in the morning than you were the night before.".After a little silence Otter said, "Thanks." And he looked up at Hound, one brief, questioning, judging glance..His throat was still so raw from the explosive vomiting, seared by stomach acid, that he sounded like a character from a puppet show for children on Saturday-morning television, hoarse and squeaky at the same time. If not for the pain, he would have felt ridiculous, but the hot and jagged scrape of each word through his throat left him unable to..Jacob had become a card mechanic for one purpose. Not because he'd ever be a gambler. Not to wow friends with card tricks. Not because the challenge intrigued him. He wanted to be able to give Agnes winning cards once in a while, if she was losing too frequently or needed to have her spirits lifted. He didn't feed her winning hands often enough to make her suspicious or to make the games less fun for Edom or Joey. He was judicious. The effort he expended-the thousands of hours of practice-was repaid with interest each time Agnes laughed with delight after being dealt a perfect hand..Of course, there was no possibility whatsoever of 'drawing four identical jacks from combined decks that had been exquisitely manipulated and meticulously arranged by a master mechanic-unless the effect of the jacks was intended, which in this case it was not. The odds couldn't be calculated because it could never happen. No element of chance was involved here. The cards in that stack should have been as predictably ordered-to Jacob-as were the numbered pages in a book..No, impossible. He had killed Victoria almost a year and a half before this phone call. When you were dead, you were gone forever..He might suspect, but he couldn't know. He would but would be left with at least a shred of doubt about Junior's..Reluctantly, Jacob finally returned the cards to the packs and admitted to himself that superstition had seized him and would not let go. Somewhere in the world was a knave, a human monster-even worse, according to Maria, a man as fearsome as the devil himself-and for reasons unknown, this beast wanted to harm little Barty, an innocent baby. By some grace that Jacob could not understand, they had been warned, through the cards, that the knave was coming. They had been warned..Opening the directory to the marker, he found a card tucked between the pages. A joker, with BARTHOLOMEW in red block letters..All windows opening onto the fire escape featured a laminated sandwich of glass and steel-wire mesh to prevent easy access by burglars. Tom Vanadium knew all the tricks of the best B-and-E artists, but he didn't need to break in order to enter here..On the day that Vanadium attended the graveside service for Seraphim and subsequently stopped at Naomi's grave to needle Cain, he had suspected that Phimie didn't die in a traffic accident, as claimed, but he hadn't for a moment thought that the wife killer was in any way connected. Now, finding this gallery brochure in the nightstand drawer seemed to be one more bit of circumstantial proof of Cain's guilt..This wasn't art. This was pandering, mere illustration, more suitable for painting on velvet than on canvas..Although she had never seen snow other than in pictures and on film, this deep-settled silence seemed to speak of failing flakes, of white muffling mantles, and she wouldn't have been in the least surprised if, stepping outside, she had found herself in a glorious winter landscape, cold and crystalline, here on the always-snowless hills and shores of the California Pacific..Evidently, her face was knotted with the effort to remember what the child had looked like, for the physician said, "Yes? What's wrong?".He visited the bank in which he maintained a safe-deposit box under the John Pinchbeck identity. He withdrew the twenty thousand in cash and retrieved all the forged documents from the box..Daylight had retreated from the windows. Winter night, wound in scarfs of fog, like a leprous mendicant, rattled out a breath as though begging their attention beyond the glass..Besides, even before he had fully turned on his charm, before he had shown her that a ride on the Junior Cain love machine would make other men seem forever inadequate, Renee was so hot for him that it might have been wise to open a bottle of champagne to douse her when spontaneous combustion destroyed her Chanel suit..When he noticed that twilight had come and gone, he realized also that he'd walked through Bright Beach, along Pacific Coast Highway, and south into the neighboring town. Perhaps ten miles..The musician had no talent for deception. His hopping-hen eyes pecked at the nearest painting, at other guests, down at the floor, everywhere but directly at Junior, and a nerve twitched in his left cheek. "Well, I'm very good, you know, at faces, they stick with me, I don't know why. Goodness knows, my memory is otherwise shot.".If her beautiful son was to be a prodigy of any kind, she would thank God for his talent and would do anything she could to help him achieve his destiny..Junior found no answers before the owner of the diner blocked him from proceeding out of the kitchen into the storeroom and the service alley beyond. Simultaneously sweating and chilled, Junior cursed him, and the confrontation became ugly..When Celestina first entered his ICU cubicle, the sight of his face scared her in spite of the surgeon's assurances. Gray, he was, and sunken-cheeked-as though this were the eighteenth century and so many medicinal leeches had been applied to him that too much of his essential substance had been sucked out.

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