

RELIABILITY CENTERED MAINTENANCE THE ULTIMATE STEP BY STEP GUIDE

"What are you strongest in?". 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. The paper towels were spotted with butter. He crumpled them and threw them in the trash. He hadn't lied to his mother. She assumed that by some quantum magic, he had regained his sight permanently, and that this came with no cost. He merely allowed her to go to her rest with the comforting misapprehension that her son had been freed from darkness. His entire body throbbed from his neck to the tips of his nine toes. His legs were the worst, filled with hot twisting agony. room, heavier and colder than the ice bags that were draped across Junior's midsection. Years earlier, a stream had been diverted to fill the vast excavation. Stock fish were added, mostly trout and bass. He thought he heard the soft swoosh of knife-edge wings slicing the January air. He dared not look up. More in his throat. The agony. Darkness poured into his head, as if it were blood rising relentlessly from his flooded stomach and esophagus. So Otter worked along with them with a clear head and an angry heart. They were in a trap. What's the use of a gift of power, he thought, if not to get out of a trap? And God has four hundred billion billion fingers, and He plays a really hot version of "Hawaiian Holiday. Life was too short to waste it working if you had the means to afford lifelong leisure." Paul told us the night he first came to the parsonage. About Agnes here ... and what had happened to Barty. And all about his late wife, Perri. I feel like I know Bright Beach already." Caution discarded, Junior went inside, for the same reason that a dedicated opera aesthete might once a decade attend a country-music concert: to confirm the superiority of his taste and to be amused by what passed for music among the great unwashed. Some might call it slumming. Even in this soft light, Nolly could see that she was blushing like a young girl. She glanced around at the nearby tables. 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. open grave. In his hand: the white rose, its thorns slick with his blood. He dropped the bloom, and it fell out of sight, into the gaping earth, atop Naomi's casket. At one point late in the afternoon, as all three Hackachaks were hurling scorn and invective at Junior, he noticed Vanadium standing in the doorway, observing. Perfect. He pretended not to see the cop, and when next he sneaked a look, he discovered that Vanadium had vanished like a wraith. A thick slab of a wraith. The bright side was easy to see. If Vanadium's reputation among other cops and among prosecutors was that of a paranoid, a pathetic a after phantom perpetrators, his unsupported belief that Naomi. "At home," Otter said. It wasn't a lie. He did have a pouch at home. He kept his fine-work tools and his bubble level in it. And he wasn't altogether lying about the wind. Several times he had managed to bring a bit of magewind into the sail of a boat, though he had no idea how to combat or control a storm, as a ship's weatherworker must do. But he thought he'd rather drown in a gale than be murdered in this hole. Otter stated it as an unfortunate fact, not as a moral assertion. Hound looked at him with appreciation. Living with the pirate king, he was sick of boasts and threats, of boasters and threateners. In a pew in Old St. Mary's Church, in Chinatown, Junior took delivery of the lock-release gun and the untraceable 9-mm pistol with the custom-machined silencer, as previously arranged. The church was deserted at ten o'clock in the morning. The shadowy interior and the menacing religious figures gave him the creeps. Although Junior was free of the superstitions that Naomi, in her innocence and sentimentality, had embraced, he wept without pretense. Junior blinked and dared not speak, because he didn't know any Bartholomew, and now he was certain the cop was weaving an elaborate web of deceit, setting a trap. Why would he have spoken a name that meant nothing to him? A SEVERE THIRST INDICATED to Agnes that she wasn't dead. There would be no thirst in paradise. 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. That Olympian purge had, however, made him appear to be both emotionally and physically devastated by the loss of his wife. He couldn't have calculated any stratagem more likely to convince most. 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. Friday brought Scamp again, all of Scamp, all day, every way, wall-to-wall Scamp, so on Saturday he hadn't enough energy to do more than shower. To look entirely like her name, she needed only white wings. He would give her wings: a short flight out the window, into the oak. The container-eye-level at the top, battered, rust-streaked, beaded with condensation-was larger than some in the alleyway, with a bifurcated lid. Both halves of the lid were already raised. In a few instances, when his suspicions were aroused in spite of their denials, Junior tracked down their residences. He observed them in the flesh and made additional-and subtle-inquiries of their neighbors until he was satisfied that his quarry was elsewhere. When Junior checked his Rolex, he realized that he didn't know how long he'd been sitting here since Ichabod had driven off in the Buick. Maybe one minute, maybe ten. Alone with Paul, as he stood abashed, she removed her blouse and bra and, with arms crossed over her breasts, revealed to him her savaged back. Whereas her father had used open-hand slaps and hard fists to teach his twin sons the lessons of God, he preferred canes and lashes as the instruments of education for his daughter, because he believed that his direct touch might have invited sin. Scars disfigured Agnes from shoulders to buttocks, pale scars and others dark, crosshatched and whorled. She thought of herself as a creative person, a capable and efficient and committed person, but she did not think of herself as a strong person. Yet she would need great strength for what lay ahead. 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!.By the time Agnes opened the driver's door and slumped behind the steering wheel, Barty levered himself onto the seat beside her. Grunting, he pulled his door shut with both hands as she jammed the key in the ignition and started the engine..The masterpiece that Junior purchased was small, a sixteen-inch-square canvas, but it cost twenty-seven hundred dollars. The entire picture-titled *The Cancer Lurks Unseen, Version 1*-was flat black, except for a small gnarled mass, bile-green and pus-yellow, in the upper-right quadrant. Worth every penny..The quiet passion in Vanadium's voice was genuine, expressed with reason but not fervor, not in the least sentimental or unctuous-which made it more disturbing. "Vibrations in one string set up soft, sympathetic vibrations in all the other strings, through the entire body of the instrument." Junior kept both forged driver's licenses in his wallet, in addition to the one that featured his real name. He stowed everything else in Pinchbeck's and Gammoner's safe-deposit boxes, along with the emergency cash..He swallowed one capsule and washed it down with water. He returned the pharmacy bottle to the nightstand..Tucking the covers around Angel, Celestina said, "Would you like Uncle Wally to be your daddy?" "That would be the best." "I think so, too." "I never had a daddy, you know." "Getting Wally was worth the wait, huh?" "Will we move in with Uncle Wally?" "That's the way it usually works." "Will Mrs. Ornwall leave?" "All that stuff will need to be worked out." "If she leaves, you'll have to make the cheese." "I believe I'll just wait here until Mr. Cain wakes," Vanadium said. "I've nothing more pressing to do." Vanadium's vehicle, obviously not an official police sedan, was a blue 1961 Studebaker Lark Regal. A dumpy and inelegant car, it looked as though it had been designed specifically to complement the stocky detective's physique..The moonlight had faded and the gentle waves had ebbed out of his mind's eye. He concentrated, trying to force the phantom sea to flow back into view, but this was one of those rare occasions when a Zedd technique failed him".KATHLEEN IN THE candlelight, her ginger eyes a glimmer with images of the amber flame. Icy martinis, extra olives in a shallow white dish. Beyond the tableside window, the legendary bay glimmered, too, darker and colder than Kathleen's eyes, and not a fraction as deep..Once, he had been a superb driver. For the past decade, his performance behind the wheel depended on his mood..Evidently, her face was knotted with the effort to remember what the child had looked like, for the physician said, "Yes? What's wrong?".Barty let go of the girl's hand, and although he remained dry, the storm at once found her where she'd been hiding in the silver-black folds of its curtains..One nurse and one nun brought Celestina into the creche behind the viewing window..The rain-washed street shimmered greasily under the tires, and the intersection lay halfway up a long hill, so gravity was aligned with fate against them. The driver's side of the Pontiac lifted. Beyond the windshield, the main drag of Bright Beach tilted crazily. The passenger's side slammed against the pavement..Throughout the day, he tried not to think about the four knaves. But he was an obsessive, of course, so in spite of all his trying, he did not succeed.. "Sometimes it's sad here, Mommy. But it's not sad every place you are. Lots of places, Daddy's with you and me, and we're happier, and everything's okay." "There's nothing here for you," she said, stepping back from the door in order to close it..So. Two monks they were: one in the service of everlasting light, the other in the service of eternal darkness..During the walk home: slow and deep, breathing slow and deep, moving not at a brisk clip, but strolling, trying to let the tension slide away, striving to focus on good things like his full exemption from military service and his purchase of the Sklent painting..Done with dolls for now, Barty and Angel went upstairs to his room, where the book that talked waited patiently in silence. With her colored pencils and a large pad of drawing paper, she clambered onto the cushioned window seat. Barty sat up in bed and switched on the tape player that stood on the nightstand..The Worry Bear carries worries in his pockets. Under his Panama hat and in two gold lockets. Carries worries on his back and under his arms. Nevertheless, dear old Worry Bear has his charms..Better still, he was able to have the girl to the accompaniment of her father's voice, which was even kinkier than doing her in the parsonage. When Junior rang the bell, Seraphim had been in her room, listening to a tape of a sermon her father was composing. The good reverend usually dictated a first draft, which his daughter then transcribed. For three hours, Junior went at her mercilessly, to the rhythms of her father's voice. The reverend's "presence" was deliciously perverse and stimulating to his sense of erotic invention. When Junior was finished, there was nothing sexual that Seraphim could ever do with a man that she had not learned from him..When he reached the Suburban and closed his right hand around the handle on the driver's door, he felt something peculiar against his palm. A small, cold object balanced there.. "More than remorse," the magician said. "Shame. I come from good people. I wasn't raised to be a cheat. Sometimes, trying to figure how I went wrong, I think it wasn't the need for money that ruined me. At least not that alone, not even that primarily. It was pride in my skill with the cards, frustrated pride because I wasn't getting enough nightclub work to show off as much as I wanted to." "So where he threw the quarter," Barty said, as Angel listened intently and nodded her head, "wasn't really into Gunsmoke, 'cause that's not a place, it's just a show. See, maybe he threw it into a place where I'm not blind, or into a place where he doesn't have that messed-up face, or a place where for some reason you never came here today. There's more places than anybody could ever count, even me, and I can count pretty good. That's what you feel, right-all the ways things are?".The young man raised his voice to be heard above the gobbling of the art turkeys. "No, sir. He just asked where the men's room was." When she discovered she was pregnant, Phimie dealt with this new trauma as other naive fifteen-year-olds had done before her: She sought to avoid the scorn and the reproach that she imagined would be heaped upon her for having failed to reveal the rape at the time it occurred. With no serious thought to long-term consequences, focused solely on the looming moment, in a state of denial, she made plans to conceal her condition as long as possible..Only madmen were capable of such butchery. Hopeless lunatics like Ed Gein, out there in Wisconsin, arrested just seven years ago, when Junior had been sixteen. Ed, the inspiration for Psycho, had constructed mobiles out of human noses

and lips. He used human skin to make lampshades and to upholster furniture. His soup bowls had once been human skulls. He ate the hearts and selected other organs of his victims, wore a belt fashioned from nipples, and occasionally danced under the moon while masked by the scalp and face of a woman he had murdered..AFTER THE ENCOUNTER with the quarter-spitting vending machines, Junior wanted to kill another Bartholomew, any Bartholomew, even if he had to drive to some far suburb like Terra Linda to do it, even if he had to drive farther and stay overnight in a Holiday ay Inn an eat steam-table food off a buffet crawling with other diners' cold germs and garnished with their loose hairs..The boy dashed for the front passenger's door. Agnes didn't follow him, because she knew that he would politely but pointedly express frustration if any attempt was made to help him with a task that he could perform himself..Moving out of the doorway, into the bedroom, he said, "What book would that be?""If you don't, your feeling gland isn't working. Want me to read you to sleep?""Be quiet, sugarpie," she said, crossing the bedroom to the door, which stood only slightly ajar..Celestina hadn't noticed the infant being taken away. She had wanted to see it once more, even though she was sickened by the sight of it..On the counter beside the bathroom sink stood an open box of BandAids in a variety of sizes, a bottle of rubbing alcohol, and a bottle of iodine..From time to time, he halted, leaning against the walker as if in need of rest. He took care occasionally to grimace-convincingly, not too theatrically---and to breathe harder than necessary..Part of him knew this sound was his heartbeat, not the footfalls of an otherworldly pursuer, but that part of him wasn't dominant at the moment. He moved faster, not exactly running, but hurrying like a man late for an appointment..Following a splendid lunch, having just left the fourth gallery on his list and strolling toward the fifth, Junior didn't at once see the source of the quarters. Indeed, when the first three rapid-fire coins hit the side of his face, he didn't even know what they were. Startled, he flinched and looked down as he heard them ring off the sidewalk..Edom and Jacob came to dinner with Agnes every evening. And though the past weighed heavily on them when they were under this roof, without fail they stayed long enough to wash the dishes before fleeing back to their apartments over the garage..In the car again, a block from home, Barty said, "Maybe you could just not tell Uncle Edom and Uncle Jacob until Sunday night. They won't handle it real well. You know?""Three years ago, in St. Mary's Hospital, with Phimie's warning fresh in her mind, Celestina swore that she would be ready when the beast came, but here he came, and she was as not ready as possible. Time passes, the perception of a threat fades, life becomes busier, you work your butt off as a waitress, you graduate college, your little girl grows to be so vital, so vivid, so alive that you know she just has to live forever, and after all, you are the daughter of a minister, a believer in the power of compassion, in the Prince of Peace, confident that the meek shall inherit the earth, so in three long years, you don't buy a gun, nor do you take any training in self-defense, and somehow you forget that the meek who will one day inherit the earth are those who forego aggression but are not those so pathetically meek that they won't even defend themselves, because a failure to resist evil is a sin, and the willful refusal to defend your life is the mortal sin of passive suicide, and the failure to protect a little yellow M&M girl will surely buy you a ticket to Hell on the same express train on which the slave traders rode to their own eternal enslavement, on which the masters of Dachau and old Joe Stalin traveled from power to punishment, so here, now, as the beast throws himself against the door, as he shoves aside the barricade, with what precious little time you have left, fight. Junior shoved through the blocked door, into the bedroom, and the bitch hit him with a chair. A small, slat-back side chair with a tie-on seat cushion. She swung it like a baseball bat, and there must have been some Jackie Robinson blood in the White family line, because she had the power to knock a fastball from Brooklyn to the Bronx..Cold, wind-driven rain slashed through the missing windows, and voices rose in the street as people ran toward the Pontiac-thunder in the distance-and on the air was the ozone scent of the storm and the more subtle and more terrible odor of blood, but none of these hard details could make the moment seem real to Agnes, who, in her deepest nightmares, had never felt more like a dreamer than she felt now..No, impossible. He had killed Victoria almost a year and a half before this phone call. When you were dead, you were gone forever..Yet, with no recollection of rising from his chair, he found that he had shouldered his backpack and crossed the room. The three men looked up expectantly..He was relieved that he hadn't moved his head or made a sound. He wanted to understand as much of the situation as possible before revealing that he was awake..THE DEAD DETECTIVE, grinning in the moonlight, a pair of silvery quarters gleaming in the sockets once occupied by his eyes..Tommy James and the Shondells, good American boys, had a record farther down the charts-"Hanky Panky"-that Junior felt was better than the Beatles' tune. The failure of his countrymen to support homegrown talent aggravated him. The nation seemed eager to surrender its culture to foreigners..Jacob cooked corn bread, cheese-and-parsley omelettes, and crisp home fries with a dash of onion salt..Unable to hold his breath or to quiet his miserable sobbing, Junior couldn't hear clearly enough to discern whether the sounds of the stalking sculpture were real or imagined. He knew that they had to be imaginary, but he felt they were real..Permissions Department, Harcourt, Inc., 6277 Sea Harbor Drive, Orlando, Florida 32887-6777. www.harcourt.com "Darkrose and Diamond" first appeared in The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction..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..Candle flames blurred into bright smears, and the faces of her good parents shimmered like the half-seen countenances of angels in dreams..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..Already, the girl had taken Barty's hand. The two kids descended from the porch into the rain. They didn't circle the oak, but stopped at the foot of the steps and turned to face the house..Barty's reading and writing skills appeared to be related to his talent for math, as well. To him, language was first phonics, a sort of music that symbolized objects and ideas, and this music was then translated into written "syllables using the

alphabet-which he saw as a system of math employing twenty-six digits instead of ten..Nothing in life was risk free, so he hesitated only a moment: at the foot of the porch steps before climbing them and knocking on the door..Six captain's chairs encircled the big round table, one for everybody, including Agnes, but only Paul and Barty stayed seated..At the bed, he spread the garment across his pillow. Lying down, he pressed his face into the sweater. The sweet subtle scent of Naomi was as effective as a lullaby, and soon he dozed off..were uniformly negative, frequently hilarious, but never as succinct and violent as Sklent's..Abruptly alert, sitting up on the edge of the bed, Celestina knew the caller could not be the comatose old woman, so she said angrily, "Who the hell is this?".In the first two weeks, when she wasn't on pie caravans, Agnes received guests in numbers that taxed her. But there were so many people she wanted to see one last time. She fought hard, giving the disease all the what-for that she could, and she held fast to hope, but she received the visitors nonetheless, just in case..Downstairs again, as Agnes reached the foot of the stairs, she began to worry that she had done too thorough a job on the khakis and that the extent of the damage would raise suspicions..Back in January, when he received the disappointing report from Nolly Wulfstan, Junior was not convinced that the private detective had exercised due diligence in his investigation. He suspected that Wulfstan's ugliness was matched by his laziness.."Angel," Phimie said thickly, searching her sister's eyes for a sign of understanding..Admittedly, she had allowed herself to be disturbed by the fall of the cards, too. According them any credibility at all opened the door to full belief.."In cases like this, the malignancy is often more advanced in one eye than the other. If the size of the tumor requires it, we remove the eye containing the greatest malignancy, and we treat the remaining eye with radiation."..The poor girl's blood pressure soared in spite of the medication. She suffered a violent seizure..Still pretending sleep, Junior delighted in the realization that the detective himself had dragged a red herring across the trail and was now busily following this distracting scent..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.."Apple juice, lime Jell-O, and four soda crackers," said the detective. "If you don't have enough of a conscience to make you confess,Downstairs, two shots cracked, and an instant after the second, an explosion shook the parsonage as though the long-promised Judgment were at hand. This was a real explosion, not the impact of another runaway Pontiac..For more than two weeks, Agnes's heart had been a clangorous place, filled with the rattle and bang of hard emotions, but now a sort of quiet had come upon it, a peace that, if it held, might one day allow joy again..Her hands were locked together in her lap, gripped so tightly for so long that the muscles in her forearms ached. "What's wrong?""Where did it go?" Grace asked her granddaughter, making as much effort as she could to lighten the mood for the girl's sake..Although she had slept well and though her hemorrhaging had been successfully arrested, Agnes was too weak to manage breakfast alone. A simple spoon was as heavy and as unwieldy as a shovel..Not a door opened in the narrow street. Nobody looked out to see what the noise was. Not till long after the men were gone did some neighbors creep out to comfort Otter's people as best they could. "Oh, it's a curse, a curse, this wizardry!" they said..Yet his heart slammed hard and heavy against his confining ribs, and fear stippled the nape of his neck..The receptionist, Rebecca, had stayed late, just to keep company with Barty in the waiting room. As she settled into a chair beside the boy, he asked her if she knew what gravity was on Mars, and when she confessed ignorance, he said, "Only thirty-seven percent what it is here. You can really jump on Mars."..Finally sleeping, he had anxiety dreams of being in a public rest room, overcome by urgent need, only to find that every stall was occupied by someone he had killed, all of them vengefully determined to deny him a chance for dignified relief..Had Junior been chest-deep in wet concrete, he would have been more mobile than he was now. He had no feeling in his legs..He had nothing against men or women of color. Live and let live. One earth, one people. All of that..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..Paul watched as Barty hopped down from his chair and crossed the busy kitchen in a straight line to the wall phone, without one hesitant move..Twilight, nearly gone and purple in the west, inspired a bright violet line along the crest of an incoming bank of bay fog, as though the mist were shot through with a luminous vein of neon, transforming the entire sparkling city into a stylish cabaret just now opening for business. The night, soft as a woman come to dance, carried a steely blade of cold in its black-silk skirts.."D'you have a bag?".The syphilitic-monkey comparison struck Tom Vanadium as bizarre, but it turned out to be a sober judgment based on experience. In his fifties, Sparky had worked as the chief of maintenance at a medical-research laboratory, where-among other projects-monkeys had been intentionally infected with syphilis and then observed over their life span. In the terminal stages, some of the primates engaged in such outr? behavior that they had prepared Sparky for his eventual encounter with Enoch Cain..Apparently, he didn't lean back far enough, because amazingly he landed on his feet in the winter-faded grass. The shock buckled him, and he dropped to his knees. Still cradling Grace, he lowered her to the ground as gently as he'd ever lowered fragile Perri onto her bed-quite as if he had planned it this way.."Well, Uncle Jacob doesn't understand kids. Anyway, this is pretty good stuff."..Glancing at her in the rearview mirror, the driver said, "Pretty exhilarating, huh? Your first big show?".At many houses, strings of Christmas lights painted patterns of color at the eaves, around the window frames, and along the porch railings-all so blurred by fog that Junior seemed to be moving through a dreamscape with Japanese lanterns..altogether by taking slow deep breaths, slow deep breaths, and by remembering that each of us has a right to be happy, to be fulfilled, to be free of fear..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..Frowning at him, she said, "You don't mind them around, do you, Joey? They're eccentric, but I love them very much."..Enough," said the nurse, and the nun reached through clouds of steam to crank off the water..As a homicide detective, Vanadium had a career-spanning ninety eight percent closure-and-conviction record on the

cases he handled. Once convinced he had found the guilty party, he didn't rely solely on solid police work. He augmented the usual investigative procedures and techniques with his own brand of psychological warfare-sometimes subtle, sometimes not-which frequently encouraged the perpetrator to make mistakes that convicted him..Finally Angel dropped and slithered, vanishing under the overhanging bedclothes with a final flurry of yellow socks..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." He hadn't paid close attention to those patrons seated at the bar behind him. Now, he turned in his chair to study them..This brilliant mouthful was not nature's work alone. With what Nolly must have spent to obtain this smile, some fortunate dentist had kept a mistress in jewelry through her most nubile years..Another of Junior's self-improvement projects, since moving to California, was to become a knowledgeable gourmet, also a connoisseur of fine wines. San Francisco was the perfect university for this education, because it offered innumerable world-class restaurants in every imaginable ethnic variety..He hadn't killed this one, of course. A traffic accident. Wasn't that what Vanadium had said? Ten months ago, following tendon surgery for a leg injury, Seraphim had been an outpatient at the rehab hospital where Junior worked. She was scheduled for therapy three days a week..Having been a volunteer instructor of English to twenty adult students over the years, having taught Maria Elena Gonzalez to speak impeccable English without a significant accent, Agnes was little needed as a teacher by her son. Even more than other children, he asked why with numbing regularity, why this and why that, but never the same question twice; and as often as not, he already knew the answer that he sought from her and was only confirming the accuracy of his deduction. He was such an effective autodidact, he schooled himself better than any college of professors that could have been assigned to him..Instead of immediately killing anyone, Junior returned to his apartment on the afternoon of December 29, and went to bed, fully clothed. To calm down. To think about focus..He turned over the two most recent discards. Neither was a jack of spades, and both were what he expected them to be.."Do you know about the earthquake that destroyed seventy percent of Tokyo and all of Yokohama on September 1, 1923?" he asked.."I thought so," Angel said, dubiousity squinching her face. "Mrs. Ornwall made me cheese."..The instant he flipped the coin, he opened both hands-palms up, fingers spread-with a distracting flourish..Her eyes, lustrous pools, brimmed with the need to know, but she respected the deal. "I only half understood all that, and I don't even know which half, but in some strange way, it feels true. Thank you. I will think about it tonight, when I can't sleep." She stepped close and kissed him on the cheek. "Who are you, Tom Vanadium?"..The presence of the brochure disturbed Vanadium also because he assumed that after being dead-ended by Nolly, Cain had subsequently discovered that Celestina had taken custody of the baby to raise it as her own. For some reason, the nine-toed wonder originally believed the child was a boy, but if he'd tracked down Celestina, he now knew the truth.."That's just ... an old joke," she heard herself saying, as from a distance. "You didn't really walk between the drops?"

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