

STEPS TO BECOMING A PUBLISHED AUTHOR

Their evenings together were comfortable bliss, though usually they just watched television, or he read to her. She enjoyed being read to: mostly historical novels and occasional mysteries. Adoption records would have been kept as secret from Celestina as from everyone else. But perhaps she knew something about the fate of her sister's bastard son that Junior didn't know, a small detail that would seem insignificant to her but that might put him on the right trail at last. He rewound the words, played them again, but still the source of the threat eluded him. He was hearing them in his own voice, as if he had once read them in a book, but he suspected that they had been spoken to him and that. After a long time the door opened and several men came in. He could do nothing against them as they gagged him and bound his arms behind him. "Now you won't weave charms nor speak spells, young'un," said a broad, strong man with a furrowed face, "but you can nod your head well enough, right? They sent you here as a dowser. If you're a good dowser you'll feed well and sleep easy. Cinnabar, that's what you're to nod for. The King's wizard says it's still here somewhere about these old mines. And he wants it. So it's best for us that we find it. Now I'll walk you out. It's like I'm the water finder and you're my wand, see? You lead on. And if you want to go this way or that way you dip your head, so. And when you know there's ore underfoot, you stamp on the place, so. Now that's the bargain, right? And if you play fair I will." "They've gone to bed. They're tired," Wally told her as he put the car in gear and released the hand brake. "Aren't you?" "Oh, sure, I know," Mary said. "But when it's a bad place, you feel it before you go in. So you just go around to the next place that isn't bad. No big deal." Havnor Great Port is the city at the heart of the world, white-towered above its bay; on the tallest tower the sword of Erreth-Akbe catches the first and last of daylight. Through that city passes all the trade and commerce and learning and craft of Earthsea, a wealth not hoarded. There the King sits, having returned after the healing of the Ring, in sign of healing. And in that city, in these latter days, men and women of the islands speak with dragons, in sign of change. He paid cash to the locksmith, and included in the payment were the two dimes and the nickel Vanadium had left on his nightstand. Calcimine moonlight cast an arctic illusion over the boneyard. The grass was as eerily silver as snow at night, and gravestones tilted like pressure ridges of ice in a fractured wasteland. "Ah, evidently you can read my mind. Scariest than heart reading any day. Maybe there's a thin line between minister's daughter and witch." Only a dishonest or delusional man, however, could justify Victoria's killing as self-defense. To a degree, he'd been motivated by anger and passion, and Junior was forthright enough to admit this. "Nah. Every secret society has a secret handshake. We'll have this instead." Her face was still close to his, and she rubbed noses with him. Instead of staring at Barty directly, he watched Angel as she studied the eyeless boy. She had exhibited no horror at the concave slackness of his closed lids, and when one lid fluttered up to reveal the dark hollow socket, she hadn't shown any revulsion. Now she moved closer to Barty's chair, and when she touched his cheek, just below his missing left eye, the boy didn't flinch in surprise. Currently, the rental market was extremely tight. The first day of his search resulted only in the discovery that he was going to have to pay more than he expected even for modest quarters. Junior tipped his head back and gazed up toward the section of broken-out railing along the high observation deck. In the morning, at breakfast, from this calmer perspective, he looked back at his tantrum in the middle of the night and wondered if he might be in psychological trouble. He decided not. In November and December, Junior studied arcane texts on the supernatural, went through new women at a pace prodigious even for him, found three Bartholomews, and finished ten needlepoint pillows. But first, March 23: the bad date with Frieda Bliss, and what he discovered in his apartment when he came home that night. What if the stubborn, selfish, greedy, grubbing, vicious, psychotic, evil spirit of Thomas Vanadium, which had earlier pursued Junior through another alleyway in broad daylight, had followed him into this one in the more ghost-friendly hours of the night, and what if that spirit were standing just outside the Dumpster right now, and what if it closed the bifurcated lid and slipped a bolt through the latch rings, and what if Junior were trapped here with the thoroughly strangled corpse of Neddy Gnathic, and what if the flashlight failed when he tried to switch it on again, and then what if in the pitch-blackness he heard Neddy say, "Does anyone have a special request?" The high point of his day was coming home to Perri. They met when they were thirteen, married at twenty-two. In May they would celebrate their twenty-third anniversary. This Dry Sack-assisted effort at recollection, however, brought back to him one thing in addition to all the sweet lubricious images of Seraphim naked. The voice of her father. On the tape recorder. The reverend droning on and on as Junior pinned the devout daughter to the mattress. Neighbors might not be home. And by the time he knocked, asked to use the phone, dialed ... Too great a waste of time. She closed her eyes, and he thought that she was gone, but then she opened them again. "There is one place beyond all the ways things are." In spite of its dazzle and power and comfort, however, the car was not able to lift his spirits as he cruised the hills of the city. Somewhere along these darkly glistening streets, in these houses and high-rises clinging to steep slopes awaiting seismic sundering, the boy was sheltered: half Negro, half white, full doom to Junior Cain. Inking? The sequined and tasseled hat of fame was too gaudy for her; she was a minister's daughter, from Spruce Hills, Oregon, more comfortable in a baseball cap. The stump was capped at the end of the internal cuneiform, depriving Junior of everything from the metatarsal to the tip of the toe. He was delighted with this result, because successful reattachment would have been a calamity. cocktail lounge to be her personal pickup spot. Naturally, people who worked the lounge knew her, were friendly with her. They would remember any man who accompanied the heiress to her penthouse. The cop had unzipped the top of her jogging suit and pulled up the roomy T-shirt. Neither of them was aware that their personal drama, in all its clumsiness and glory, had focused the attention of everyone in the restaurant. The cheer that went up at Celestina's acceptance of his proposal caused her to start, knocking the ring from Wally's hand as he attempted to slip it

on her finger. The ring bounced across the table, they both grabbed for it, Wally made the catch, and this time she was properly betrothed, to wild applause and laughter..honor and family. This was life, and everyone lived his life in the shadow of one solemn obligation or another..Refusing to give the cop the satisfaction of a reply to the news of the unborn baby's paternity, Junior stared unwaveringly into the grave and said, "Whose funeral were you attending?". "Good heavens, Vinnie, I know that," she assured him as she lifted Barty-hardly bigger than a bag of sugar-from the bassinet. She settled with the baby into a rocking chair..Dropped cartridges gleamed on the carpet. Stoop to snatch them up? No. That was asking for a skull-cracking blow..Then quickly from Spruce Hills to Eugene by car, from Eugene to Orange County Airport by a chartered aircraft, from Orange County to Bright Beach in a stolen '68 Oldsmobile 4-4-2 Hurst, while the advantage of surprise remained with him. Carrying a newly acquired, silencer-fitted 9-mm pistol, spare magazines of ammunition, three sharp knives, a police lock-release gun, and one piece of steaming luggage, Junior had arrived late the previous evening..Taking her mother's advice to heart, Celestina sighed. "All right. Let's just pray they catch him. But if they don't ... two weeks, and then the rest of the plan, the way you said, Tom. Except that I can't tolerate two weeks-in a hotel, cooped up, afraid to go into the streets, no sun, no fresh air."..By the time Junior passed the three offices and found the men's room, Neddy had occupied it. The door was locked, which must mean this was a single-occupant john.. "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?". She curled up in the armchair, watching Barty. She was greedy for the sight of him. She thought she would not doze off, but would spend the night watching over him, yet exhaustion defeated her..Agnes added this stop to her route at the request of Reverend Tom Collins, the local Baptist minister whose folks unthinkingly gave him the name of a cocktail. She was friendly with all the clergymen in Bright Beach, and her pie deliveries favored no one creed..Minutes later, once more in a corridor conference with Dr. Daines, she was forced to temper her new optimism..Vanadium hadn't seen the man who had clubbed him from behind and who had smashed his face with a pewter candlestick, but when~ he spoke the name Enoch Cain, the quality in his eyes was not compassion. No fingerprints had been left, no evidence in the aftermath of the fire at the Bressler house or in the Studebaker hauled from Quarry Lake..I believe the universe is sort of like an unimaginably vast musical with an infinite number of strings.".. "And in some of them, maybe I died the night you were born, and you live alone with your dad."..Grace White was petite, and Paul wasn't. Otherwise he might not have been able to halt her determined rush toward her husband, might not have been able to scoop her off her feet and, carrying her in his arms, spirit her to safety..His patience exhausted, the pianist wrenched his hand out of Junior's grip. He glanced around nervously, certain that they must be the center of attention, but of course the reception guests were lost in their witless conversations, or they were gaga over the maudlin paintings, and no one was aware of this quiet little drama.. "That would be wrong. A diary's private." He supposed that to a detective nothing was sacred, but he was nonetheless a little shocked that Vanadium needed to ask that question..He assumed that she hadn't phoned the police to make a formal report. No need to go out of her way to slander Junior when Thomas Vanadium had been prowling the hospital at all hours of the day and night, ready to lend an ear to any falsehood about him, as long as it made him appear to be a sleazeball and a wife killer..In Room 724, standing alone at her sister's bedside, watching the girl sleep, Celestina told herself that she was coping well. She could handle this unnerving development without calling in either of her parents.. "Most tornadoes stay on the ground twenty miles or less," Edom explained, "but this one kept its funnel to the earth for two hundred nineteen miles! And it was one mile wide. Everything in its path--torn, smashed to bits. Houses, factories, churches, schools--all pulverized. Murphysboro, Illinois, was wiped off the map, erased, hundreds killed in that one town."..Agnes remembered the blood, the awful red flood. Excruciating pain and such fearsome crimson torrents. She'd thought her baby had entered the world stillborn on a tide of its own blood and hers..Junior had come to the gumshoe four days ago, with business that might have made a reputable investigator uncomfortable. He needed to discover whether Seraphim White had given birth at a San Francisco hospital earlier this month and where the baby might be found. Since he wasn't prepared to reveal any relationship to Seraphim, and since he resisted devising a cover story on the assumption that a competent private detective would at once see through it, his interest in this baby inevitably seemed sinister..Prudence required that they strategize as though Enoch Cain were Satan himself, as though every fly and beetle and rat provided eyes and ears for the killer, as though ordinary precautions could never foil him..Later, as Bonita and Francesca proudly served their mother's individually molded Christmas-tree-shaped servings of flan, which they themselves had plated, Barty leaned close to his mother and, pointing to the table in front of them, said softly but excitedly, "Look at the rainbows!". They hadn't been close to Naomi, who'd once said she felt like Romulus and Remus, raised by wolves, or like Tarzan if he'd fallen into the hands of nasty gorillas. To Junior, Naomi was Cinderella, sweet and good, and he was the love-struck prince who rescued her..Before he could replay the memory for further contemplation, Junior saw Ichabod exiting the house. The man returned to the Buick, seeming to float through the mist, like a phantom on a moor. He started the engine, quickly hung a U-turn in the street, and drove uphill to the house from which he had earlier collected Bartholomew.. "So I drew attention to myself. Raised suspicions. One night, in St. Louis, this rube recognized me from my performing days, even though I'd changed my looks. It was a high-stakes game, but the players weren't high-class. They ganged up on me, beat me, and then smashed my hands, one finger at a time, with a tire iron."..When Bartholomew first said "Kay-jub," and held out one hand toward his uncle, Jacob surprised Agnes by crying with happiness.. "You figure all this," Jolene asked, "because Mother Nature gives us a nice warm day in January?". "In addition," Daines said, "her pelvis is small, which would present problems of delivery even in an ordinary pregnancy. And the muscle fibers in the central canal of her cervix, which ought to be softening in anticipation of labor, are still tough. I don't believe the cervix will dilate well enough to

facilitate birth." Escorting her home didn't require either a car or a long walk, because she lived upstairs in the hotel where he'd had dinner. The top three floors of the building featured enormous owner-occupied apartments..The nurse was in was gone, but Maria remained in attendance. She the vinyl-and-stainless-steel armchair, busy at. LEFT HAND ON the banister, right hand with knife tucked close to his side and ready to thrust, Tom Vanadium climbed cautiously but quickly to the upper floor, glancing back twice to be sure that Cain didn't slip in behind him..He had been surprised to learn her age. She didn't appear to be that old. Thirty or not, Victoria was unusually attractive..efficiency of a nurse, but as a courtesan might perform the task: smiling enticingly, a flirtatious glimmer in.The paramedic snatched the oxygen feed from his patient's nose and quickly elevated his head, providing a purge towel to catch the thin ejecta..This didn't work for Junior. Strangely, when he focused on a mental image of any fruit-apple, peach, banana-his thoughts drifted to sex. He became aroused and had no hope of clearing his mind..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..Agnes held a smile as best she could, determined that her son's final glimpse of her face would not leave him with a memory of her despair..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..He lay still, waiting for silence to return, so he could hear whether the great gong had drawn people into the alley..He backed toward the hall door, watching as the fire spread. After lingering until certain that the house would soon be a seething pyre, he finally sprinted along the hall to the front door..Convinced that the house was playing tricks on him, Barty went downstairs, step by measured step, to the foyer and the ground-floor hall..CELESTINA RETURNED TO Room 724 to collect Phimie's belongings from the tiny closet and from the nightstand..It occurred to her that the knave had come, as foretold by the cards on that night long ago. She had expected the knave to be a man with sharp eyes and a wicked heart, but the curse was cancer and not a man at all.."Yes," she assured him, though her gaze had dropped from his mouth to his hand, so small, which she held in hers..Junior didn't believe in gods, devils, Heaven, Hell, life after death. He put his faith in one thing: himself..With only a faint twinge of sentimental longing, he drove away from the house that had been his and Naomi's love nest for fourteen blissful months..He was surprised they had come so soon, less than twenty-four hours after the tragedy. This was especially unusual, considering that a homicide detective was obsessed with the idea that rotting wood, alone, was not responsible for Naomi's death.."My dad's already armored me," Celestina assured her. "He says art lasts, but critics are the buzzing insects of a single summer day." As if he sensed her reluctance to return to Dr. Chan, Barty had kept her occupied with talk of the red planet as they approached the office building, had talked her off the street, along the driveway, and into a parking space, where finally she relinquished the fantasy of an endless road trip. At 5:45, long past the end of office hours, Dr. Chan's suite was quiet..Murder itself was easy, but the aftermath was more draining than he had anticipated. Although the ultimate liability settlement with the state was certain to leave him financially secure for life, the stress was so great that he wondered, in his darker moments, if the reward would prove to be worth the risk..In January 1965, Magusson had sent Cain to Nolly as a client, not sure why the creep needed a private detective. That had turned out to be the business about Seraphim White's baby. Simon's warning to be careful of Enoch Cain had helped to shape Nolly's decision to withhold the information about the child's placement..On a street a half mile from the airport in Eugene, he sat in the parked Dodge long enough to gingerly unwind the bandages and use a tissue to wipe off the pungent but useless salve he'd purchased at a pharmacy. Although he pressed the Kleenex to his face so gently that the pressure might not have broken the surface tension on a pool of water, the agony of the touch was so great that he nearly passed out. The rearview mirror revealed clusters of hideous, large, red knobs with glistening yellow heads, and at the sight of himself, he actually did pass out for a minute or two, just long enough to dream that he was a grotesque but misunderstood creature being pursued through a stormy night by crowds of angry villagers with torches and pitchforks, but then the throbbing agony revived him..Initially, Helen Greenbaum, at Greenbaum Gallery, had taken on three canvases, and had sold them within a month. She took four more, then another three when two of the four moved quickly. By the time that she'd placed ten pieces with collectors, Helen decided to include Celestina in a show of six new artists. And now, already, she had a show of her own..Now, here, all three on the street and vulnerable at once-the man, Celestina, the bastard boy..Although Dr. Lipscomb spoke almost as softly as the long-winded pianist, and though the physician's narrow face was homely and devoid of any trace of violent temperament, Neddy Gnathic flinched from him and retreated across the threshold, into the hallway..Even Angel, mere wisp of a cherubim, couldn't squeeze through a seven-inch opening..Too late, Paul thought of the one more thing he had wanted to say. Too late, he said it anyway, "God bless you." Celestina looked up from the scarred top of the desk toward the fog-white sky beyond the window, from reality to the promise..In fact, although weak and achy, Junior felt mentally refreshed and wonderfully alert..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..Again, he cast his line of memory into murky waters nearly four years in the past, to the night of passion that he had shared with Seraphim in the parsonage. As before, he could recall nothing she'd said, only the exquisite look of her, the nubile perfection of her body..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..He pressed his right ear to the door, held his breath, heard nothing, and addressed the top lock first. Quietly, he slid the thin pick of the lock-release gun into the key channel, under the pin tumblers..His eyes were strangely radiant, as he had never seen them before, as if the shining angel who would guide him elsewhere had already entered his body and was with him to begin the

journey..Amused, Wally said, "You artists do love to dramatize-or have I forgotten the San Francisco blizzard of '65?".Harrison and Grace had welcomed him in spite of the fact that a friend and parishioner had died on Thursday, leaving them both bereft and with church obligations..Casey and Tutti, her sister Skipper, and dreamboat Ken-and soon the girls had Barty enthusiastically involved in a make-believe world far different from the one in which Heinlein's teenage lead owned an extraordinary alien pet with eight legs, the temperament of a kitten, and an appetite for everything from grizzly bears to Buicks..After Bellini left, Tom questioned Celestina extensively, with an emphasis on Phimie's rape. Although the subject was painful, she was grateful for the questions. Without this distraction, in spite of her well of hope, she might have allowed her imagination to fashion terror after terror, until Wally had died a hundred times over in her mind..Oregon State Police might find at least one reason to be suspicious of the tragic scenario that he was creating. He didn't know much about the technology that police might employ at a crime scene, and he knew even less about forensic pathology. He was just doing the best job he could..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..Arriving home, he hesitated to open the door. He expected to find Vanadium inside.

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