

THE PUBLIC SERVANT FEB 1916

Junior needed something in his life, a missing element without which he could never be complete, something more than a heart mate, more than German or French, or karate, and for as long as he could remember, he'd been searching for this mysterious substance, this enigmatic object, this skill, this thingumajigger, this dowhacky, this flumadiddle, this force or person, this insight, but the problem was that he didn't know what he was searching for, and so often when he seemed to have found it, he hadn't found it after all, therefore he worried that if ever he did find it, then he might throw it away, because he would not realize that it was, in fact, the very jigger or gigamaree that he'd been in search of since childhood..With the salt and pepper shakers, Tom walked them through the why-I'm-not-sad-about-my-face explanation that he'd given to Angel ten days previously.. "I know how to build boats, how to sail boats." Unobtrusively, Junior followed the musician across the large front room, but by an indirect arc, using the babbling bourgeoisie for cover.. Junior had almost fumbled his fork when he recognized the tune. His heart raced. His hands were suddenly clammy.. Over generous slices of Black Forest cake and coffee, Jacob at first held forth on the explosion of a French freighter, carrying a cargo of ammonium nitrate, at a pier in Texas City, Texas, back in 1947. Five hundred and seventy-six had perished.. They were driven to St. Mary's by Detective Bellini in a police sedan. Tom Vanadium-a friend of her father's whom she had met a few times in Spruce Hills, but whom she didn't know well--literally rode shotgun, tensed to react, wary of the occupants of other vehicles on. "It's chilly and foggy and late, and there might be villains afoot at this hour," he intoned with mock gravity. "The two of you are Lipscomb women now, or soon will be, and Lipscomb women never go unescorted through the dangerous urban night." Too much had happened in those rooms. They were stained dark with family history, and in the night, when either Edom or Jacob slept under that gabled roof, the past came alive again in dreams.. She was in Paul's arms again, as though by magic, and he ran as fire broke through the cedar-shake shingles and as the roof shuddered under them. Airborne through billowing smoke. Across flames that briefly caressed the soles of his shoes.. He was still her boy. As always, her boy. Bartholomew. Barty. Her sweetie. Her kiddo.. This baffled Junior. To the best of his recollection, during the weeks that Seraphim had come to him for physical therapy, she had never mentioned an older sister or any sister at all.. Junior and Naomi had taken their dried apricots from the same bag. Reached in the bag without looking. Shook them out into the palms of their hands. She could not have controlled which pieces of fruit he received and which she ate.. Having risen higher in the sky during the past couple hours, the gold-coin moon reminted itself as silver, and in the black lake, its reflection rolled across the knuckles of the quiet wavelets.. Testing Celestina's nerves as fully as Barty had tested his mother's, Angel pulled-levered -shinnied-swung herself so fast up through the tree, arriving at the boy's side while red streaks still enlivened a sky that was repainting itself purple. She stood in the crook of limbs with him, and her delighted laughter rang down through the cathedral oak. 1975 through 1978: Hare ran from Dragon, Snake fled from Horse, and '78 bounced to the beat, because disco ruled. The reborn Bee Gees dominated the airwaves. John Travolta had the look. Rhodesian rebels, grasping the dangers inherent in any battle between equals, had the manful courage to slaughter unarmed women missionaries and schoolgirls. Spinks won the title from Ali, and Ali won it back from Spinks.. In July 1967, at two and a half, he finally contracted his first cold, an off-season virus with a mean bite. His throat was sore, but he didn't fuss or even complain. He swallowed his medicine without resistance, and though he rested occasionally, he played with toys and paged through picture books with as much pleasure as ever.. "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.. "It's all right," Tom assured her. To Angel, he said, "No, I'm not sad. And you know why?". sky grew sullen in the early twilight, and the city once more arrayed itself in the red gesso and gold leaf that had indirectly illuminated Celestina's apartment ceiling the previous night.. Kathleen savored her martini. "Mmmm ... as cold as a hit man's heart and as crisp as a hundred-dollar bill from the devil's wallet." "It's even worse," Junior rasped, convinced that he was losing some indefinable advantage if the cop left without playing out this moment as it would usually unfold in an intellectual television crime drama like Perry Mason or Peter Gunn.. 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.. Both the red and the white wines were too cheap for Junior's taste' so he drank Dos Equis beer and got two kinds of high by inhaling enough secondhand pot smoke to cure the state of Virginia's entire annual production of hams. Among the two or three hundred partiers, some were tripping on some exhibited the particular excitability and talkativeness typical of cokeheads, but Junior succumbed to none of these temptations. Self-improvement and self control mattered to him; he didn't approve of this degree of self indulgence.. He stashed two suitcases full of clothes and toiletries-plus the contents of Pinchbeck's safe-deposit box-in the van, and then added those precious items that he'd be loath to lose if the hit on Bartholomew went wrong, forcing him to leave his Russian Hill life and flee arrest. The works of Caesar Zedd. Sklent's three brilliant paintings. The needlepoint pillows, to which he'd colorfully applied the wisdom of Zedd, constituted the bulk of this collection of bare essentials: 102 pillows in numerous shapes and sizes, which he had completed in just thirteen months of feverish stitchery~. Now, here, all three on the street and vulnerable at once-the man, Celestina, the bastard boy.. If the aftermath of his encounter with Vanadium had not been so messy, Junior might have paused for dinner before wrapping up his work here. The walk back from Quarry Lake had taken almost two hours, in part because he had ducked out of sight in the trees and brush each time that he heard traffic approaching. He was famished. Regardless of how well-prepared the food, however, ambience was a significant factor in the enjoyment of any meal, and bloodstained decor was not, in his view, conducive to fine

dining..Focus, Caesar Zedd teaches, is the sole quality that separates millionaires from the flea-ridden, sore-pocked, urine-soaked winos who five in cardboard boxes and discuss vintages of Ripple with their pet rats. Millionaires have it, winos don't. Likewise, nothing but the ability to focus separates an Olympic athlete from a cripple who lost his legs in a car wreck. The athlete has focus, and the cripple doesn't. After all, Zedd notes, if the cripple had it, he would have been a better driver, an Olympic athlete, and a millionaire..Seven or eight years after Tehanu was published, I was asked to write a story set in Earthsea. A mere glimpse at the place told me that things had been happening there while I wasn't looking. It was high time to go back and find out what was going on now..-nor cruel, nor hateful, nor envious, nor mean," Phimie recited, "for all these are sicknesses of this fallen world-".The minister had finished. The service was over. No one came to Junior with condolences, because they would see him again shortly, at the Ford dealership buffet..Fear of the unknown is a weakness, for it presumes dimensions to life beyond human control. Zedd teaches that nothing is beyond our control, that nature is just a mindlessly grinding machine with no more mysteries in it than we will find in applesauce..The kiss was lovely, long and easy, full of restrained passion that boded well for nights to come in the marriage bed..Of course, Angel might have been playing around with the talking book. Or, even though she'd left the dolls downstairs, she might have been filling the time until Barty's return by having a nice chat with Miss Pixie and Miss Velveeta. She had other voices, too, for other dolls, and one for a sock puppet named Smelly..Rudy Hackachak--Big Rude to his friends--was six feet four, as rough-hewn as a log sculpture carved with a woodsman's ax. In a green polyester suit with sleeves an inch too short, an unfortunate urine yellow shirt, and a tie that might have been the national flag of a third world country famous for nothing but a lack of design sense, he looked like Dr. Frankenstein's beast gussied up for an evening of barhopping in Transylvania..He was about to lift the body out of the chair when he heard the car in the driveway. He might not have caught the sound of the engine so distinctly and so early if the stereo had not been in the process of changing albums.. "Can't change your own form, even seemingly?".In the afternoon, Dr. Schurr came to the hospital to review test results and to reexamine Barty. When the early-winter twilight gave way to night, he sent them back to Dr. Chan, and Agnes didn't press Schurr for an opinion. All day she'd been impatient for a diagnosis, but suddenly she was loath to have the facts put before her..He was wrong about this. On the final Friday of every month, in sunshine and in rain, Junior routinely took a walking tour of the six galleries that were his very favorites, browsing leisurely in each and chatting up the galerieurs, with a one-o'clock break for lunch at the St. Francis Hotel. This was a tradition with him, and invariably at the end of each such day, he felt wonderfully cozy.. "Three hundred and ninety-six of the dead were children under the age of ten," Jacob continued. "A passenger train was tumbled off the tracks, killing twenty. Another train with tank cars got smashed around, and oil spilled across the flood waters, ignited, and all these people clinging to floating debris were surrounded by flames, no way to escape. Their choice was being burned alive or drowning."..Celestina's question had been about Phimie, but they had told her about the baby, and she was alarmed by their evasion.. "Now this. But even if your dad had cooperated with me, nothing would have changed. Since Phimie never revealed his name, I wouldn't have been able to go after Cain any differently or more effectively."..Behind them, the door rebounded forcefully from a rubber-tipped stopper and closed with a thud. The lock wasn't engaged, however, and they might be interrupted momentarily.. "Did they rush you straight in here or did you arrange all the insurance matters at reception, Mr. Pinchbeck?". "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."..This was his door, however, not hers. She did not possess a ticket to ride the train that had come for him. He boarded, and the train was gone, and with it the light in his eyes. She lowered her mouth to his, kissing him one last time, and taste of his blood was not bitter, but sacred..So runs the water away..In spite of major earthquakes pending, explosions of dynamite hauling trucks on the highway, tornadoes somewhere churning, the grim likelihood of a great dam bursting along the route, freak ice storms stored up in the unpredictable heavens, crashing planes and runaway trains converging on the coastal highway, and the possibility of a sudden violent shift in the earth's axis that would wipe out human civilization, they risked crossing the boundaries of Bright Beach and traveled north into the great unknown of territories strange and perilous..He half expected to hear Thomas Vanadium in the distance, softly singing "Someone to Watch over Me."..Better. Fear doesn't require him even to seduce a woman or to buy a bottle of whiskey. He just needs to open himself to it, and he will be filled like a glass under a faucet. As difficult as this may be to comprehend, Cain would choose to be neck-deep in a bottomless pool of terror, desperately trying to stay afloat, rather than to suffer that unrelieved hollowness. Fear can give shape and meaning to his life, and I intend not merely to fill him with fear but to drown him in it."..From time to time, customers had crossed the cocktail lounge to drop folding money into a fishbowl atop the piano, tips for the musician. A few had requested favorite -tunes..Turning to face his four trailing escorts, all of whom were hunch shouldered and stiff-necked with tension, Barty said, "What's for dinner?". "In the years since I began to write about Earthsea I've changed, of course, and so have the people who read the books. All times are changing times, but ours is one of massive, rapid moral and mental transformation. Archetypes turn into millstones, large simplicities get complicated, chaos becomes elegant, and what everybody knows is true turns out to be what some people used to think..He also concluded arrangements to open an account for Gammoner in a Grand Cayman Island bank and one for Pinchbeck in Switzerland..Continuing to avert his eyes from the battered face and the two tone eyelids, Junior found the keys in an exterior pocket of the sports jacket. The credentials were tucked in an interior pocket: a single-fold leather holder containing the shiny badge and a photo ID..He nervously fingered the fabric of his slacks, outlining the quarter in his pocket. Still there.. "September 13, 1928. Lake Okeechobee, Florida. Two thousand people died in a flood."..He kept a few paperbacks of Caesar Zedd's work in the bathroom, so that time spent on the john wouldn't be wasted. Some or, his deepest insights into the human condition and his best

ideas for self-improvement had come in this place, where Zedd's luminous words seemed to shine a brighter light into his mind upon rereading..Celestina was unable to talk reason to him, and even her mother, Grace, who was living here for the interim and who was always oil on the stormiest of waters, couldn't bring a moment's calm to the velvet squall that was Neddy Gnathic in full blow. He had learned about the baby five days ago, and he had been building force ever since, like a tropical depression aspiring to hurricane status..Junior found the acclaim gratifying, but the widespread use of his photograph was a high price to pay even for the recognition of his contribution to art. Fortunately, with his bald head and pocked face, he no longer resembled the Enoch Cain for whom the authorities were searching. And they believed that the bandages on his face, at the church, had been merely an exotic disguise. One psychologist even speculated that the bandages had been an expression of the guilt and shame he felt on a subconscious level. Yeah, right..a deeply troubled John Wayne while the delightful David Niven floated along overhead in a basket suspended from a huge, colorful hot-air balloon..Her hands shook, her entire body shook, and in her mind was a hard clatter of fear like the wheels of a roller coaster rattling over poorly seamed tracks..This momentous day, he thought, and he shook with sudden terror at the inevitability of new beginnings.. "Simon's a funny duck," Vanadium said, "but I like him more than a little and trust him implicitly. He wanted to know what he could do to help. Initially, my speech was slurred, I had partial paralysis in my left arm, and I'd lost fifty-four pounds. I wasn't going to be looking for Cain for a long time, but it turned out Simon knew where he was."..In all the many ways things are, across the infinity of worlds and all Creation, Barty believed that no woman existed whose beauty exceeded hers or whose heart was better..THE SANDMAN WAS powerless to cast a spell of sleep while Junior spent the night flushing away enough water to drain a reservoir.. "Yes," she assured him, though her gaze had dropped from his mouth to his hand, so small, which she held in hers..With every step through the long night walk, Paul had considered what he would say, must say, if this encounter ever took place. Now all his practiced words deserted him..His mouth was dry when he said to Angel, "Well, it seems pretty magical to me-that flipped-coin trick.".. "Would you pretend to wake up if I tried to smother you?" asked Detective Vanadium..EACH MOMENTOUS DAY, the work was done in memory of his mother. At Pie Lady Services, always, they sought new recipes and new ways to brighten the corner where they were.. "All right. I get my new eyes from a doctor. They're not real eyes, just plastic, to fill in where my eyes used to be."..Turning in Celestina's lap, Angel said, "Smell," and held the index finger of her right hand under her mother's nose..Paul sat by himself, at the far end of the restaurant from them. He ordered orange juice and waffles..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..His mother, gently pushing Tom to the prime view point at the head of the stairs, seemed unconcerned about her child's venture into the storm..A forgetful client had left the bumbershoot in the office six months ago. Otherwise, Nolly wouldn't have had any umbrella at all..64 just a little bit ago," the girl said. "I was sitting on the porch, having a Popsicle, and I just figured it out."..the grass, silent because he is barely conscious, too badly beaten to protest or to plead for mercy, but also..They came to her, picked up the luggage that she had put down, and Edom said, "I'll drive.".. "I'm gonna dream about baby chickens," she told Celestina, "and if I'm all yellow, they'll think I'm one of them."..If the angular mass was Neddy, the vaguely warm, damp something must be the strangled man's protruding tongue..The painkiller was not morphine-based, and it did not signal its presence in the system by inducing sleepiness or even a faint blurring of the senses. After forty minutes, however, he was sure that it must be effective, and he put the book aside..Halfway home, he heard sirens and saw the beacons of approaching emergency vehicles. He pulled the Suburban to the side of the road and watched as two fire trucks passed, followed by an ambulance.. "It's there even when you read to me now. The sad feeling, I mean. It changes the story, makes it not as good, because I can't pretend I don't hear how sad you are."..This thought startled Agnes, disturbed her-yet, inexplicably, it also poured a measure of warm comfort into her chilled heart..He did wonder why he had chosen this night of all nights to become even a more fearless adventurer, rather than a month ago or a month hence. Instinct told him that he'd felt the need to test himself, that a crisis was fast approaching, and that to be ready for it, he must be confident that he could do what had to be done when the crunch came. Slipping into sleep, Junior suspected that Prosser might have been less lark than preparation..Junior considered leaving before Vanadium-still seventy-five yards away-arrived. He was afraid he would appear to be fleeing..As he stepped out of the street, Don't Walk shortened to Walk, and when he checked for pursuit, he found it. Here came Vanadium, who would have been shivering in want of a topcoat if his flesh had been real..Barty set one other rule: "Without dying first ... and you have to be sure you can get back.".. "A ship without an anchor can never be at rest," he answered. "It's at the mercy of the sea."..She took a deep breath. She lifted her head, straightened her shoulders, and went inside, where a new life waited for her..He paid cash to the locksmith, and included in the payment were the two dimes and the nickel Vanadium had left on his nightstand.. "And you're saying fear can fill his emptiness as well as sex or booze?" Kathleen wondered..The little hands, so weak now but someday strong: Would they eventually be capable of savagery, as were the father's hands? Misbegotten offspring. This seed of a demonic man whom Phimie herself had called sick and evil. However innocent-looking now, what pain might she eventually in-- on others? What outrages might she

commit in years to come? Although Celestina searched intently, she could not glimpse the father's evil in the child..Prepared for any contingency, Junior listened to the house until he was certain that he needed the knife for no one else..I. In the Dark Time.To Dr. Parkhurst, Vanadium said, "In my work, I see lots of people who've just lost loved ones. None of them has ever puked like Vesuvius."Everyone regarded him expectantly, as if there would be more magic, as if flipping a coin into another reality was something you saw every week or two on the Ed Sullivan Show, between the acrobats and the jugglers who could balance ten spinning plates on ten tall sticks simultaneously..The previous April, the lads from Liverpool had claimed all five of the top five. Real Americans, like the Beach Boys and the Four Seasons, were forced to settle for lower numbers. It made you wonder who had really won the Revolutionary War..He wasn't entirely sure what all he hoped to find. Perhaps an envelope or a cash box with folding money, which a fleeing murderer would surely pause to take with him. Suspicions might be raised if he left it behind. Perhaps a savings-account passbook..Suddenly remembering the doctor's assurance to Neddy that they would be out of this building by week's end, Celestina said, "But we've nowhere to go."In a red coat with a red hood, Bartholomew appeared first in the arms of the tall lanky man, the Ichabod Crane look-alike, who also had a large tote bag hanging from his shoulder..Bill wasn't impressed. "They build houses out of mud in China. No wonder everything falls down."Because the glass wings of the open window didn't lie flat against the exterior wall, they blocked his view. He had to thrust himself farther through the opening, until he seesawed on the sill, before he could see the length of the entire block, in which the gallery stood at approximately the middle..Junior's breath smoked from him as if he contained a seething fire of his own. He felt a sheen of condensation arise on his face, cold and invigorating..Koko skidded to a halt, perplexed, looked left, looked right, floppy ears lifted slightly to catch any sound of Mistress Mary.."You feel remorse, though," said Agnes. "I can see you do. And not just because of what happened to your hands."He wondered what it would be like to make love to Renee and kill her. Only once had he killed without good reason. And that had been one of the infuriating Bartholomews. Prosser in Terra Linda. A man. On that occasion, no erotic element had been involved. This would be a first..The sign promised topless dancers. Although Junior had been in San Francisco for over a week, he had not yet sampled this avant-garde art form..To the window. The warm room sucked cooling fog out of the night, and she leaned across the sill into the streaming mist..Angel, on the window seat, wore nothing but white. White sneakers and socks. White pants. White T-shirt. Two white bows in her hair..He lived high, on Russian Hill, in a limestone-clad building with carved Victorian detail. His one-bedroom unit included a roomy kitchen with breakfast nook and a spacious living room with windows looking down on twisty Lombard Street..Lipscomb women gladly obey the wishes of Lipscomb men-unless they disagree, of course, or don't disagree but are just feeling mulish..Hisscus, Nork, and Knacker exchanged sharp glances, nonplussed. Finally, one of them said, "We couldn't do that, Mr. Cain. Not until you've consulted an attorney."Through her efforts, the Bright Beach Public Library sponsored an ambitious oral-history project financed by two private foundations and by an annual strawberry festival. Local retirees were enlisted to record the stories of their lives, so that their experiences, insights, and knowledge wouldn't be lost to generations yet unborn..Concerned that Junior's crying jag would trigger spasms of the abdominal muscles and ultimately another attack of hemorrhagic vomiting, the nurse had with her a tranquilizer. She wanted him to use the apple juice to wash down the pill..This time, however, the singing lasted longer than before, long enough for him to become suspicious of the heating ducts. These rooms had ten-foot ceilings, and the ducts opened high in the walls..By the time he got to the cooler, he could see this wasn't smoke, after all. It dissipated too quickly. Cool against his hand. The cold steam from dry ice..On the third of June, he found another useless Bartholomew, and on Saturday, the twenty-fifth, two deeply disturbing events occurred. He switched on his kitchen radio only to discover that "Paperback Writer," yet another Beatles song, had climbed to the top of the charts, and he received a call from a ea woman..Between Isleton and Locke, Junior first became aware of several points of soreness on his face. He could feel no swelling, no cuts or scrapes, and the rearview mirror revealed only the fine features that had caused more women's hearts to race than all the amphetamines ever manufactured..From, the darkness of his room, Barty now spoke the words for which Agnes had been waiting, his whisper soft yet resonant in the quiet house: "Good-night, Daddy."We have inhabited both the actual and the imaginary realms for a long time. But we don't live in either place the way our parents or ancestors did. Enchantment alters with age, and with the age.."Yes, Barty," Tom said. "I feel a depth to life, layers beyond layers. Sometimes it's ... scary. Mostly it inspires me. I can't see these other worlds, can't move between them. But with this quarter, I can prove that what I feel isn't my imagination." He extracted a quarter from a jacket pocket, holding it between thumb and forefinger for all but Barty to see. "Angel?".Wonderful. Oh, perfect. So Neddy, a friend of Celestina's, knew that Junior, reputed to be a vicious sadist, had attended this reception under a false name. If Junior really was a sleazy pervert of such rococo tastes that he would be shunned even by the scum of the world, even by the deranged mutant offspring of a self-breeding hermaphrodite, then surely he was capable of murder, too..Standing over the body, he squeezed off the last three shots. Finished, he detested guns more than ever..This device, which could automatically pick any lock with just a few pulls of its trigger, was sold strictly to police departments, and its distribution was tightly controlled. On the black market it commanded such a high price that Junior could have bought the better part of a small Sklent painting for the same bucks..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..Eleven years later, a few months after marrying Agnes, Joey mysteriously invited Edom to accompany him on "a little drive," and took his bewildered brother-in-law to a nursery. They returned home with fifty pound bags of special mulch, jars of plant food, and an array of new tools. Together, they stripped the sod from the side yard, turned the soil, and prepared the ground for the rich variety of hybrid starter plants that

were delivered the following week..Onward he came, past the left front fender, gleefully hopping up and down, as if on a pogo stick, still waving.

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