

JUDITFIGUR IN DER VULGATA EINE THEOLOGISCHE STUDIE ZUR LATEINISCHEN BIBEL

Wet cobblestones and tattered blacktop. Hurry, hurry. Past the lighted casement window in the gallery men's room..Angel followed him and observed as he climbed a stepstool and unhooked the telephone handset. He dialed with little pause between digits, and spoke with each of his uncles.. "Dr. Lipscomb delivered the baby like two minutes ago. The afterbirth hasn't even been removed yet," the nurse informed her.. "This is Detective Bellini, with the San Francisco Police Department. Is everything all right there?"..done with it at last, he opens his mouth, lets the roses be shoved in, the bitter green taste of the juice crushed from..The past three years had given Wally much to celebrate, as well. After selling his medical practice and taking an eight-month hiatus from the sixty-hour work weeks he had endured for so long, he'd been giving twenty-four hours of free service to a pediatric clinic each week, providing care to the disadvantaged. He'd worked hard all his life, and saved diligently, and now he was able to focus solely on those activities that gave him the greatest gratification..people that he was innocent and, in fact, constitutionally incapable of premeditated murder..Holding a shaker in each hand, Tom walked them forward, causing them to diverge slightly at first, but then moving them along exactly parallel to each other..The cemetery had been mown for the holiday. The scent of fresh cut grass grew more intense the longer Agnes met her son's radiant green-blue gaze, until the fragrance became exquisitely sweet..Sometimes, in his mind, Tom wasn't running along the residential streets of Bright Beach, but along the corridor of the dormitory wing over which he had served as prefect. He was cast back in time, to that dreadful night. A sound wakes him. A fragile cry. Thinking it a voice from his dream, he nevertheless gets out of bed, takes up a flashlight, and checks on his charges, his boys. Low-wattage emergency lamps barely relieve the gloom in the corridor. The rooms are dark, doors ajar according to the rules, to guard against the danger of stubborn locks in the event of fire. He listens. Nothing. Then into the first room-and into a Hell on earth. Two small boys per room, easily and silently overcome by a grown man with the strength of madness. In the sweep of the flashlight beam: the dead eyes, the wrenched faces, the blood. Another room, the flashlight jittering, jumping, and the carnage worse. Then in the hall again, movement in the shadows. Josef Krepp captured by the flashlight. Josef Krepp, the quiet custodian, meek by all appearances, employed at St. Anselmo's for the past six months with nary a problem, with only good employee reviews attached to his record. Josef Krepp, here in the corridor of the past, grinning and capering in the flashlight, wearing a dripping necklace of souvenirs..Mysteriously, on the first day of sunny weather in weeks, the 707 had crashed into Jamaica Bay, Queens, killing everyone aboard. Now, in 1965, it remained the worst commercial-aviation disaster in the nation's history, and because of the unprecedented dramatic television coverage, the story was a permanent scar in Celestina's memory, although she had been living a continent away at the time..His inner turmoil boiled ever more fiercely, and the external evidence of it grew more obvious. In the cool air of the fading afternoon, he perspired as profusely as a man already being strapped into an electric chair; it streamed, gushed. He shook, shook, and he was half convinced that he could hear his bones rattling together like the shells of hard-boiled eggs in a rolling cook pot..Junior had seen the silvery coin snapping off the cop's thumb and spinning upward. Now it was gone, as though it had vanished in midair..A s?ance was what it appeared to be at first. Eight people were gathered around the dining-room table, which stood utterly bare. No food, no drinks, no centerpiece. They all exhibited that shiny-faced look of people nervously awaiting the revelations of a spirit medium: part trepidation, part soaring hope..Junior was motivated not by twisted needs, but by rational self interest. Consequently, he opted to load the detective's body into the cramped backseat of the Studebaker with all limbs intact and head attached..She remained fixated on the card that she had just dealt, and for a while she didn't speak, as though the eyes of the paper knave held her in thrall. Finally she said, "Monster. Human monster..". "No, the monster lives in there," Barty said, which was a joke, because he'd never suffered night frights of that-or any--sort..Glass in the door next to Agnes cracked, dissolved. Pebbly blacktop like a dragon flank of glistening scales hissed past the broken window, inches from her face..Regrettably, at 2:00 A.M., February 28, waking alone in Tammy's bed, Junior sought her out and found her snacking in the kitchen. Forsaking a fork in favor of her fingers, she was eating a..By ones and twos, the festive crowd eventually deconstructed, but for Celestina, an excitement lingered in the usual gallery hush that rebuilt in their wake..This morning, only his love for his sister, Agnes, gave him the courage to drive and to become the pie man..The roses filling the countersunk vases in the comers of Joey's gravestone were not Edom-grown, but they were Edom-bought. He had visited the florist himself, personally selecting each bloom from the inventory in the cooler; but he didn't have the courage to accompany Agnes and Barty to the grave.. "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 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.. "Will I love you tomorrow, you mean, and the day after tomorrow, and on forever? Of course, forever, Wally, always..". The symptoms that terrified Phimie-the headache, crippling abdominal pain, dizziness, vision problems-had entirely relented. Possibly they had been more psychological than physical in nature..Glancing at her in the rearview mirror, the driver said, "Pretty exhilarating, huh? Your first big show?". The strand was inclined toward the lake. He closed the door and got out of the way as the Studebaker rolled forward, gathering speed..Returning to his apartment, Edom had to pass under the limbs of the majestically crowned oak that dominated the deep yard between the house and the garage.. "Your mind is as fascinating as ever," he said. "Your soul as beautiful. Listen, Per, since we were thirteen, I was never primarily interested in your body. You flatter yourself shamelessly if you think it was all that special even before the polio..". In

the chilly darkness, his breath plumed visibly, frosted by moonlight. The rapidity and raggedness of his radiant exhalations would have marked him as a guilty man if witnesses had been present..That same day, he dared to visit two galleries. Neither of them had a pewter candlestick on display..Agnes's chilled bones. Pushing a tangle of wet hair away from her face, she realized that her hands were shaking..Raised by a father to whom any form of amusement was blasphemy, Agnes had never seen a magician perform until she was nineteen, when Joey Lampion, then her suitor, had taken her to a stage show. Rabbits plucked out of top hats, doves conjured from sudden plumes of smoke, assistants sawn in half and mended to walk again; every illusion that had been old even in Houdini's time was a jaw-dropping amazement to her that evening. Now she remembered a trick in which the magician had poured a pitcher of milk into a funnel fashioned from a few pages of a newspaper, causing the milk to vanish when the funnel, still dry, was unrolled to reveal ordinary newsprint. The thrill that had quivered through her that evening measured I on the Richter scale compared to the full 10-point sense of wonder quaking through her at the sight of Barty as dry as if he'd spent the afternoon perched fireside..Agnes wanted to tell them that all their efforts would be to no avail, that they should cease and desist, be kind and let her go. She had no reason to stay here anymore. She was moving on to be with her dead husband and her dead baby, moving on to a place where there was no pain, where no one was as poor as.Sometimes, while shaving or combing his hair, as he was looking in the bathroom or foyer mirror, Junior thought that he glimpsed a presence, dark and vaporous, less substantial than smoke, standing or moving behind him. At other times, this entity seemed to be within the mirror. He couldn't focus on it, study it, because the moment he became aware of the presence, it was gone.. "Tragic. Her string's been cut too soon. Her music's ended prematurely," Junior said, feeling confident enough to dish a serving of the maniac cop's half-baked theory of life back to him. "There's a discord in he universe now, Detective. No one can know how the vibrations of that discord will come to affect you, me, all of us." "Was a priest," he corrected. "Might be again. At my request, I've been under a dispensation from vows and suspension from duties for twenty-seven years. Ever since those kids were killed." The boy wasn't translucent, as his father's ghost had been on that drizzly January night almost three years ago. The same drowned light of this gray afternoon that revealed the gravestones and the dripping.This surprised him. Of course, Oregon was not the Deep South. It was a progressive state. Nevertheless, he was surprised. Oregon wasn't home to many Negroes, either, a handful compared to those in other states, and yet until now Junior supposed that they had their own cemeteries..Whereas Paul had been confounded in his desire to express his admiration for Salk, he was able to speak about Perri at length and with ease. Her wit, her heart, her wisdom, her kindness, her beauty, he goodness, her courage were the threads in a narrative tapestry that Pad could have continued weaving for all the rest of his days. Since her death, he hadn't been able to talk about her with anyone he knew, because his friends tended to focus on him, on his suffering, when he wanted them only to understand Perri better, to realize what an exceptional person she had been. He wanted her to be remembered, after he was gone, wanted her grace and her fortitude to be recalled and respected. She was too fine a woman to leave without a ripple in her wake, and the thought that her memory might pass away with Paul himself was anguishing..Someone named Bartholomew had adopted Seraphim's son and named the boy after himself Junior applied the patience learned through meditation to the task at hand, and instinctively, he soon evolved a motivating mantra that continuously cycled through his mind while he studied the telephone directories: Find the father, kill the son..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.. Heart jumping like the heart of a fox-stalked rabbit, she ran from the driveway into the yard. She would have cried out if her throat hadn't seized up with terror at the sight of her boy at neck-breaking height. By the time she could speak, she realized that a shout, or even the unexpected sound of her plaintive voice, might unnerve him, cause him to misstep, and bring him caroming down, limb to limb, in a bone snapping plunge..Blind he remained until an afternoon in May 1993, when at last the miracle occurred, and the meaning that Tom Vanadium had foreseen so long ago began to manifest..This morning, as Barty stood to one side listening, his mother asked Maria for poems by Emily Dickinson..The baby felt too light to be real. She weighed five pounds fourteen ounces, but she seemed lighter than air, as though she might float up and out of her aunt's arms..Agnes hadn't asked him to keep his strange feat a secret from his uncles. In truth, she had come home in such a curious state of mind that even as she'd worked with Jacob to prepare dinner and even as she'd overseen Edom's setting of the table, she hesitated to tell them what had happened on the run from Joey's grave to the station wagon. She fluctuated between guarded euphoria and fear bordering on panic, and she didn't trust herself to recount the experience until she had taken more time to absorb it.. "You look very, very handsome this morning, Mr. Barty, " squeaked Pixie Lee, who was something of a flirt. "You look like a big movie star.Victoria lived on the northeast edge of Spruce Hills, where streets petered into country lanes. Here the houses tended to be more rustic, built on larger and less formally landscaped lots than those closer to the center of town, and set back farther from the street.. "Why should I care whether you have any peace?" she asked, and she seemed to be listening to a woman other than herself..Through nine months of quiet panic, however, Phimie grew less rational week by week, resorting to reckless measures that endangered."I'll do your share of the housework for a month. If I'm closer to the date, you clean up all my pie-baking and other kitchen messes for a month-the bowls and pans and mixers, everything." When his stomach rolled uneasily and his scalp prickled, he was seized by panic, certain that he was going to suffer both violent nervous emesis and severe hives, breaking out and chucking up at the same time. He popped the capsules into his mouth but couldn't produce enough saliva to swallow them, so he turned on the faucet, filled his cupped hands with water, and drank, dribbling down the front of is jacket and sweater.. "Shape-taking?" Grimacing, she said, "I told the police about your disgusting little come--on with the ice spoon." 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."Wally gave her tests. She's got an exceptional understanding of color, spatial relationships, and geometric forms for a child her age. She may be a visual prodigy."A man with beautiful celadon eyes, his face beaded with jewels of rain, reached through the cut-away door and removed the blanket from Agnes..IN HIS FORD VAN filled with needlepoint and Sklent and Zedd, Junior Cain-Pinchbeck to the world-left the Bay Area by a back door. He took State Highway 24 to Walnut Creek, which might or might not have walnuts, but which offered a mountain and a state park named for the devil: Mount Diablo. State Highway 4 to Antioch brought him to a crossing of the river delta west of Bethel Island. Bethel, for those who had taken good advanced courses in vocabulary improvement, meant "sacred place."..not yet acknowledged, when our flailing species briefly floats insensate between one desperate swim and another..Behind them, two shots roared, and Paul knew that the reverend was no longer of this world..He never passed through a phase during which he grew resistant to hugging or kissing. He was a hand-holding, cuddling boy to whom displays of affection came easily..Celestina intended to capture Nella as she was now, head at rest upon the pillow of, perhaps, her deathbed, eyes closed and mouth slack, face ashen but serene. Then she would draw four more portraits, using bone structure and other physiological evidence to imagine how the woman had looked at sixty, forty, twenty, and ten..They were each down to one last sip of wine, studying dessert menus, when Celestina began to wonder if, in spite of all instincts and indications, she might be wrong about the state of Wally's heart. The signs seemed clear, and if his radiance wasn't love, then he must be dangerously radioactive-yet she might be wrong. She was a woman of some insight, quite sophisticated in many ways, with the raw-nerve perceptions of an artist; however, in matters of romance, she was an innocent, perhaps even more pitifully naive than she realized. As she perused the list of cakes and tarts and homemade ice creams, she allowed doubt to feed upon her, and as the thought grew that Wally might not love her that way, after all, she became desperate to know, to end the suspense, because if she didn't mean to him what he meant to her, then Daddy was just going to have to accept her conversion from Baptist to Catholic, because she and Angel would have to spend some serious heart-recovery time in a nunnery..He had the capacity to be exceptional at anything to which he applied himself. Bob Chicane had been right about that: Junior was far more intense than other men, possessed of greater gifts and the energy to use them..The formless apprehension with which she had awakened at 1:50, Tuesday morning, had returned to her from time to time during the past couple days. Now, here it came again, pinching her throat and tightening her chest-at last beginning to take form.."But what made you choose that life? You must have committed to the seminary awfully young."Two things about him were remarkable, beginning with his face. His head was wrapped with white gauze bandages, so he looked like Claude Rains in *The Invisible Man* or like Humphrey Bogart in that movie about the escaped convict who has plastic surgery to foil the police and to start a new life with Lauren Bacall. Blond hair sprouted from the top of the elaborate wrappings. Otherwise, only his eyes, his nostrils, and his lips were uncovered..AT ST. MARY'S HOSPITAL, where Wally had brought Angel into this world three years ago, he was now fighting for his life, for a chance to see the girl grow and to be the father she needed. He'd been taken to surgery already when Celestina and Angel arrived a few minutes behind the ambulance.."It's an uncommon reaction," the physician acknowledged, "but not so uncommon as to be rare."."Brush your teeth, too," Celestina said, leaning against the jamb in the open doorway..For two years, since finding the quarter in his cheeseburger, Junior had been searching for a metaphysics that he could embrace, that squared with all the truths that he had learned from Zedd, and that didn't require him to acknowledge any power higher than himself Here it was. Unexpected. Complete. He didn't fully understand the bit about monkeys and barrels, but he got the rest of it, and peace of a sort descended upon him..In spite of her nature, Agnes could not find forgiveness in her heart this time. Words of absolution clotted in her throat. Her bitterness dismayed her, but she could not deny it..thickened with the odors of antiseptics and blood, until breathing required an effort..Recently, Wally administered to Angel a set of apperception tests for three-year-olds, and the results indicated that she might not ever be a math whiz or a verbal gymnast, but that she might be highly talented in other ways. Her appreciation of color, her innate understanding of the derivation of secondary hues from the primary colors, her sense of spatial relationships, and her recognition of basic geometric forms regardless of the angle at which they were presented were all far beyond what was exhibited by other kids her age. Wally said she was visually, rather than verbally, gifted, that she would undoubtedly exhibit increasing precociousness in matters artistic, that she might follow Celestina's career path, and that she might even prove to be a prodigy..For a while, Junior half convinced himself that the quarter in his cheeseburger, in December '65, was a meaningless coincidence, unrelated to Vanadium. His short tour of the kitchen, in search of the perpetrator, had given him reason to believe the diner's sanitary standards were inadequate. Recalling the greasy men on that culinary death squad, he knew that he'd been fortunate not to discover a dead rodent spread-eagle on the melted cheese, or an old sock..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.."There's nothing here for you," she said, stepping back from the door in order to close it..Junior stepped back and squeezed off two shots, aiming for the lock. One round tore a chunk out of the jamb, but the other cracked through the door, shattering more than wood, and the brass knob wobbled and almost fell out.."He's blind, sure, but he's also a boy," Angel said, "and trees are something that boys gotta do."This was the same woman who had been stripping the second bed when Celestina arrived earlier. Now she was here to remake the first..She approached the kitchen table and swept her hand across it, to emphasize its emptiness.."Nature has no maternal instincts," Edom said quietly but with conviction. "To think otherwise is sheer sentimentality at its worst. Nature is our enemy. She's a vicious killer."..Junior Cain felt as if his heart had been lanced

by a needle so thin that the muscle still contracted rhythmically but painfully around it. She did? She. . . she wrote that?" "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." 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,." "Be quiet, sugarpie," she said, crossing the bedroom to the door, which stood only slightly ajar.. Junior liked women who drank a lot. They were usually amorous or at least unresistant.. On the two-chair bed beside her mother, Angel issued small cries of distress in her sleep. Whatever presences flocked around her in the dream, they weren't baby chickens.. 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.. Fortunately, he'd kept neither cash nor his checkbook in the suitcase. With Zedd intact, his losses were tolerable.. Simon Magusson-capable of representing the devil himself for the proper fee, but also capable of genuine remorse-visited Vanadium in the hospital, soon after learning that the detective had awakened from a coma. The attorney shared the conviction that Cain was the guilty party, and that he'd also murdered his wife.. He'd wanted to give Celestina more help than she would accept. She continued working nights as a waitress for two years, while she completed classes at the Academy of Art College, and she quit her job only when she began to sell her paintings for enough to equal her wages and gratuities.. As the heavyset nurse retreated with the baby, Phimie's grip on her sister's hand relaxed, but then grew firm once more as her gaze also became more intense. "Love ... you." Celestina, the battering Baptist, back in action, came at him again. With one leg broken, another cracked, and the stretcher bar splintered, the chair wasn't as formidable a weapon as it had been. She swung it, Junior dodged, she struck at him again, he juked, and she reeled away from him, gasping.. 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.".. Shifting the Suburban out of park, Wally said, "I didn't know Baptists indulged in wagering." The black service road seemed to come out of nowhere, then to vanish into a void, and Junior suddenly felt dangerously isolated, alone as he had never been, and vulnerable.. Barty had never been instructed in the rules of grammar, but had absorbed them as the roots of Edom's roses absorbed nutrients. "Sure. Does and is." By eleven months, his vocabulary had expanded to nineteen words, by Agnes's count: an age when even a precocious child usually spoke three or four at most.. His Country Squire laden with cookies, plum cakes, homemade caramel corn with almonds, and gifts, Edom drove directly home from Obadiah Sepharad's place, which had been their final stop. He roared away as if trying to outrun tornadoes and tidal waves.. Intending to keep the front of the gallery under surveillance from behind the wheel of his Mercedes, Junior checked the time as he walked toward the car. His wrist was bare, his Rolex missing.. Then from San Francisco International, through the fog-shrouded streets of the night city, to St. Mary's, to Room 724. And to the discovery that Phimie's blood pressure was so high-210 over 126-that she was in a hypertensive crisis, at risk of a stroke, renal failure, and other life-threatening complications.. Eventually he put the quarter on the nightstand, switched off the lamp, and slipped into bed.. "So do I, honey. Oh, Lord, so do I." She kissed his forehead. "Listen, kiddo, in spite of their stories and all their funny ways, your uncles are good men.".. Alone with Agnes, the physician said, "I want you to take Barty to a specialist in Newport Beach. Franklin Chan. He's a wonderful ophthalmologist and ophthalmological surgeon, and right now we don't have anyone like that here in town.".. "Sure. That's how it works with everything. Everything that can happen does happen, and each different way of happening makes a whole new place.".. Nolly adored her laugh, so musical and girlish. He would have made all sorts of a fool out of himself, anytime, just to hear it.. If the ace of diamonds, in quartet, must be taken seriously, then why not the rest of the draw?. 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.. Junior released Neddy and, letting him slide down the wall to the floor, returned to the door to lock it. Reaching for the latch, he suddenly expected the door to fly open, revealing Thomas Vanadium, dead and risen. The ghost didn't appear, but Junior was shaken by the mere thought of such a supernatural confrontation in the middle of this crisis.. The slow-motion death ballet, in which Bonnie and Clyde were riddled with bullets, was the worst moment Junior had ever heard in a film. He didn't see more than a brief glimpse of it, because he sat with his eyes squeezed shut. Nine days previously, at Google's instructions, Junior had rented boxes at two mail-receiving services, using the name John Pinchbeck at one, Richard Gammoner at the other, and then he had supplied those addresses to the papermaker. These were the two identities for which Google ultimately provided elaborate and convincing documentation.. After checking her carotid artery and detecting no pulse, Junior returned to the sofa in the living room. He fluffed the little pillow and left it precisely as he had found it.. "I see. Sometimes. Just quick. For like a blink. Like when you stand between two mirrors. You know?".. In July, she went for a walk on the shore with Paul Damascus, expecting to do a little beachcombing, to watch the comical scurrying crabs. Somewhere between the seashells and the crustaceans, however, he asked her if she could ever love him.. As Nolly hung his raincoat and his porkpie hat on a rack by the hall door, Kathleen Klerkle appeared in the entrance to the

nearest of the two treatment rooms. "Are you ready to suffer?" Like a spring-loaded novelty snake erupting from a can, Junior exploded up from the chair, nearly knocking it over. He wondered if the hawk had descended in a constricting gyre, justice coming down, but he could not lift his head to see. 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. "Me, me," Celestina said. "In fact, fiancées should come first." Turning in Celestina's lap, Angel said, "Smell," and held the index finger of her right hand under her mother's nose. Agnes at last relented. "Someday, you're going to have to learn to relax, Maria." "Well, it's true," he said, finally turning the key in the proper direction and firing up the engine. IN HOSPITALS, AS in farmhouses, breakfast comes soon after dawn, because both healing and growing are hard work, and long days of labor required to save the human species, which spends as much time earning its pain and hunger as it does trying to escape them. As best he could, he examined his clothes. They were better pressed than he expected, and not noticeably soiled. He wasn't afflicted with parenthood envy. A baby was the last thing he would ever want, aside from cancer. Children were nasty little beasts. A child would be an encumbrance, a burden, not a blessing. Filled with the songs of swallows that evidently preferred these precincts to the more famous address of San Juan Capistrano, this mild March morning was perfect for pie deliveries. Agnes and Grace had produced a bakery's worth of glorious vanilla-almond pies and coffee toffee pies. Ford dealership, which he'd closed for business until three o'clock: lamentations, lunch, and moving reminiscences of the deceased shared among the shiny new Thunderbirds, Galaxies, and Mustangs. That venue would provide Junior with the witnesses he required for his reluctant, tearful, and perhaps even angry concession to the Hackachaks' insistent materialism. On this chilly January night, no campers or fishermen had staked claims along the lake. Because the trees were far enough back to be lost in the night, the immediate shore and the pooled blackness that it encircled appeared as desolate as any landscape on a world without an atmosphere. In the spring and summer of '66, he flew to Memphis, Tennessee, stayed a few days, and walked 288 miles to St. Louis. From St. Louis he hiked west 253 miles to Kansas City, Missouri, and then southwest to Wichita. From Wichita to Oklahoma City. From Oklahoma City east to Fort Smith, Arkansas, from whence he rode home to Bright Beach on a series of Greyhound buses. Embarrassed, Kathleen stopped singing, but to the other woman, Nolly said, "It is a lovely voice, isn't it? Haunting, I think." Laying the gun on the newspaper, he dropped into the chair. He picked up his coffee. The search of the house had been conducted with such urgency that the java was still pleasantly hot. Fresh from sedative-assisted sleep, which hadn't ended until they were in the taxi between the hospital and the hotel, Angel had proved as fully resilient as only children could be when they still retained their innocence. She didn't understand how seriously Wally had been hurt, of course, but if the attack by Cain had terrorized her while she'd watched it from beneath her mother's bed, she didn't seem in danger of being permanently traumatized. He hadn't paid close attention to those patrons seated at the bar behind him. Now, he turned in his chair to study them. Her metal hands were still crossed defensively over her breasts. The artist had welded large hexagonal nuts to her rake-tine fingers to suggest knuckles, and balanced on one nut was a fourth quarter. More likely than not, he would cross Bartholomew's path when he least expected, not as a consequence of his searching, but in the normal course of a day. If that happened, he must be prepared to eliminate the threat immediately, by any means available to him. Aware of the dangers of dehydration, he drank a bottle of water and put two half-gallon containers of Gatorade in the Suburban. Simon Magusson, lacking family, had left his estate to Tom. This came as a surprise. The sum was so considerable that even though Tom was on a dispensation from his vows, which included his vow of property, he was uncomfortable with his fortune. His comfort was quickly restored by contributing the entire inheritance to Pie Lady Services. They had been brought together by two extraordinary children, by the conviction that Barty and Angel were part of some design of enormous consequence. But more often than not, God weaves patterns that become perceptible to us only over long periods of time, if at all. After the past three eventful years, there were now no weekly miracles, no signs in the earth or sky, no revelations from burning bushes or from more mundane forms of communication. Neither Barty nor Angel revealed any new astonishing talents, and in fact they were as ordinary as any two young prodigies can be, except that he was blind and she served as his eyes upon the world. They were uniformly negative, frequently hilarious, but never as succinct and violent as Sklent's. The glittering room appeared unchanged. Even the piano player seemed to be the man who'd been at the keyboard back then, though his yellow-rose boutonniere and probably his tuxedo, as well, were new. "I don't want an attorney." He closed his eyes, lowered his head to the pillow, and sighed. "I just want ... peace."

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