

## **VERNUNFT ALS BEWUSSTSEIN DER ABSOLUTEN SUBSTANZ**

For a moment, none of them spoke. The silence was as flawless as the preternatural hush reputed to precede the biggest quakes. "It's all the same. Cars, trains, ships, all the same," Jacob insisted. "You remember the Toya Maru? Japanese ferry capsized back in September '54. Eleven hundred sixty-eight people dead. Or worse, in '48, off Manchuria, God almighty, the boiler exploded on a Chinese merchant ship, six thousand died. Six thousand on a single ship!" Junior was free of superstition. He believed in neither gods nor demons, nor in anything between. Briefly, Junior felt humiliated. He wanted to drag the detective out of the car and stomp on his smug, dead face. Instruction in Braille wasn't recommended for three-year-olds, but an exception was made in this case. Agnes arranged to have Barty receive a series of lessons, although she suspected that he'd absorb the system and learn to use it in one or two sessions. His enjoyment of the art was diminished by these associations, and as Junior turned away from Industrial Woman, his attention was suddenly captured by the quarters. Three lay on the floor at her gear wheel-and-meat-cleaver feet. They had not been here earlier. When he was baking, the world seemed to be a less dangerous place. Sometimes, making a cake, he forgot to be afraid. His precious wife had fallen from the tower and died only hours before this girl was born. This girl ... this vessel. With a cry of alarm, he bolted to the bathroom and made it with not a second to spare. He seemed to be on the throne long enough to have witnessed the rise and fall of an empire. He knocked the pepper shaker on its side, and then with a groan put it upright once more. Babies of unwed mothers-especially of dead unwed mothers, and especially of dead unwed mothers whose fathers were ministers unable to endure public mortification-were routinely put up for adoption. Since Seraphim had given birth here, the baby would be-no doubt already had been-adopted by a San Francisco-area family. 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." Like a spring-loaded novelty snake erupting from a can, Junior exploded up from the chair, nearly knocking it over. Great anger was apparent in the way that the uneven, red block letters had been drawn on the wall in hard slashes. But the lettering looked like the work of a calm and rational mind compared to what had been done after the three Bartholomews were printed. Prepared for any contingency, Junior listened to the house until he was certain that he needed the knife for no one else. Neddy talked when Celestina paused for breath, talked over her when she didn't pause, heard only his own mellifluous voice and was pleased to conduct both sides of the conversation, wearing her down as surely as though far more rapidly than the sand-filled winds of Egypt diminished the pharaohs' pyramids. He talked through the first polite "Excuse me" of the tall man who stepped into the open doorway behind him, through the second and third, and then with an abruptness that was as miraculous as any cure at the shrine of Lourdes, he fell silent when the visitor put a hand on his shoulder, eased him gently aside, and entered the apartment. He stepped into the house, quietly closed the front door, and examined the bottle. The glass was thick, especially at the base, where a large punt--a deep indentation-encouraged sediment to gather along the rim rather than across the entire bottom of the bottle. This design feature secondarily contributed to the strength of the container. Evidently he had hit her with the bottom third of the bottle, which could most easily withstand the blow. Agnes discovered, from her research, that among child prodigies, Barty was not a wonder of wonders. Some math whizzes were absorbed by algebra and even by geometry before their third birthdays. Jascha Heifetz, became an accomplished violinist at three, and by six, he played the concertos of Mendelssohn and Tchaikovsky; Ida Haendel performed them when she was five. His thought had been that Reverend White might find in Agnes, Bright Beach's beloved Pie Lady, a subject who would inspire a sequel to the sermon that had so deeply affected Paul-who was neither a Baptist nor a regular churchgoer-when he had heard it on the radio more than three years ago. "That's not what they say," the boy replied with a giggle, for his extensive reading had introduced him to words that he and she agreed were not his to use. "I'll always know your face," he promised. "Even if you have to go away and you're gone a hundred years, I'll remember what you looked like, how you felt." This was a relaxation technique that had worked often before. He had teamed it from a brilliant book, *How to Have a Healthier Life through Autohypnosis*. One apartment to the right, one to the left. Junior went to the right, to Apartment 1, where he'd seen the lights come on behind the curtained windows. With his ringleted yellow hair, coiled mustache, and haughty right file, this was a jack that looked as if he might be a knave in the worst sense of the word. Five days ago, reasoning that an unscrupulous attorney would know how to find an equally unscrupulous private detective, even across state borders, Junior had phoned Simon Magusson, in Spruce Hills, for a confidential recommendation. Apparently, there also existed a brotherhood of the terminally ugly, the members of which sent business to one another. Magusson-he of the large head, small ears, and protuberant eyes-had referred Junior to Nolly Wulfstan. Eventually, when he had gone through the entire directory, if he'd had no success, he would phone each red-checked listing and ask for Bartholomew. A few hundred calls, no doubt. Some would involve long-distance charges, but he could afford the toll. She held his face in both hands and kissed each of his beautiful jewel eyes. "You ready?" Since he knew where Celestina would be on January 12, there was no point in taking risks to find her sooner. He had plenty of time to prepare for their encounter, time to savor the sweet anticipation. The door was falling shut. With no more sound than the day makes when it turns to night, the detective had gone. Celestina White was the center of attention, always surrounded by champagne-swilling, canape--gobbling bourgeoisie who would have been shopping for paintings on velvet if they'd had less money. He moved from a crib to a bed of his own, with guardrails, months ahead of the average toddler. Within a week, he requested that the rails be left down. First he tore two paper towels from a wall-mounted dispenser and held one in each hand, as makeshift gloves. He was determined to leave no fingerprints. Junior was accustomed to having women seduce him. His good looks were a

blessing of nature. His commitment to improving his mind made him interesting. Most important, from the books of Caesar Zedd, he had learned how to be irresistibly charming..She told him to stay on the line, stay on no matter what, told him to keep talking to her, and he hung up..Junior attended a New Year's Eve party with a nuclear-holocaust theme. Festivities were held in a mansion usually hung with cutting-edge art, but all the paintings had been replaced with poster-size blowups of photos of ruined Nagasaki and Hiroshima..Angel was lying on a towel on the convertible sofa, where Grace had just changed her diaper..Junior held the silencer-fitted 9-mm pistol under his left arm, clamped against his side, freeing both hands to use the automatic pick..He wanted to say: The vain, power-mad politicians who milk cheers from ignorant crowds, the sports stars and preening actors who hear themselves called heroes and never object, they should all wither with shame at the mention of your name. Your vision, your struggle, the years of grueling work, your enduring faith when others doubted, the risk you took with career and reputation--it's one of the great stories of science, and I'd be honored if I could shake your band.."I'm not going anywhere," she pledged. She had realized that his voice was growing heavy with sleep. "But it's time for you to go to dreamland."..Excessive insurance, Agnes believed, was a temptation to fate. "A reasonable policy, yes, that's fine. But a big one ... it's like betting on death."..In the morning, after their first night together, without either of them suggesting what must be done, Barty and Angel went in silence into the backyard and, together, climbed the oak, to watch the sunrise from its highest bower. Three years later, on Easter Sunday in 1986, the fabled bunny brought them a gift: Angel gave birth to Mary. "It's time for a nice ordinary name in this family," she declared.."But you wouldn't be willing to use that skill in the King's service?"..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.".."Maybe he's a character I saw in a movie or read in a novel. I'm a member of the Book-of-the-Month Club. I'm always reading one thing or another. I don't remember a character named B-Bartholomew, but maybe I read the book years ago."..After wiping her floury hands, Agnes took the book from him and, examining it, could find nothing wrong. She flipped back a few pages, then a few forward, but the lines of type were crisp and clear. "Show me where, honey."..Then he closed his eyes, held the revolver in both hands, and at point-blank range, he shot the dead woman twice..Indeed, she found it difficult to talk with her son in their usual easy way. She heard a stiffness in her voice that she knew would sooner or later be apparent to him..He was a man with a plan, focused, committed, ready to act and then think, as soon as he was able to act. A spasm of pain weakened his hand. Cartridges slipped through his fingers, fell to the floor..Evidently, the hero was accustomed to encounters of this nature. He rose, pulled out the unused fourth chair. "Please sit with us."..Jacob didn't know how he could ever bear to look at Agnes when she came home from the hospital. The sorrow in her eyes would kill him as surely as a knife to the heart..Sad symbols of a romance not meant to be, the red rose and the bottle of wine lay on the floor of the foyer. With the corpse gone, no signs of violence remained..Even though the detective was on the wrong track, Junior was beginning to feel aggrieved. As any good citizen, he was willing, even eager to cooperate with responsible policemen who conducted their investigation by the book. This Thomas Vanadium, however, in spite of his monotonous voice and drab appearance, gave off the vibes of a fanatic..Finally he began: Greetings on this momentous day. I'm writing to you about an exceptional woman, Agnes Lampion, whose life you have touched without knowing, and whose story may interest you..Junior was less surprised by his sudden assault on Victoria than by the failure of the bottle to break. He was, after all, a new man since his decision on the fire tower, a man of action, who did what was necessary. But the bottle was glass, and he swung forcefully, hard enough that it smacked her forehead with a sound like a mallet cracking against a croquet ball, hard enough to put her out in an instant, maybe even hard enough to kill her, yet the Merlot remained ready to drink..The strange barrage of lightning, putting an end to the rain rather than initiating it, had been a clue. The rapid clearing of the sky--indicating a stiff wind at high altitudes, while stillness prevailed at ground level--a sudden plunge in the humidity, and an unseasonable warmth confirmed the coming catastrophe..He had time to think of quite a few, because he drove five miles per hour below the posted speed limit. He couldn't risk being stopped for a traffic violation when Thomas Vanadium, the human stump, was dead and bundled in the back.."Yes, but it's a Catholic hospital, and they offer this option to all unwed mothers--doesn't matter what their religion."..As the nurse gave Junior the injection, Parkhurst said, "You're an exceptionally sensitive man, Enoch. That's a quality to be much admired in an often unfeeling world. But in your current condition, your sensitivity is your worst enemy."..At nearly forty years of age, Edom still dreamed of that grim summer afternoon, although not as often as in the past. When it troubled his sleep these days, it was a nightmare that gradually metamorphosed into a dream of tenderness and hope. Until the last few years, he'd always awakened when the roses were being jammed into his mouth or when the thorns flicked through his eyelashes, or when Agnes began to strike their father with the Bible, thus seeming to assure worse punishment. This additional act, this transition from horror to hope before he woke, had been added when Agnes was pregnant with Barty. Edom didn't know why this should be so, and he didn't try to analyze it. He was simply grateful for the change, because he woke now in a state of peace, never with worse than a shudder, no longer with a hoarse cry of anguish..Meanwhile, he became an accomplished meditator. Guided by Bob Chicane, Junior progressed from concentrative meditation with seed the mental image of a bowling pin-to meditation without seed. This advanced form is far more difficult, because

nothing is visualized, and the purpose is to concentrate on making the mind utterly blank.. "Yes. More about that later, just let me make it clear that an interest in physics doesn't make me a physicist. Even if I were, I couldn't explain quantum mechanics in an hour or a year. Some say quantum theory is so weird that no one can fully understand all its implications. Some things proven in quantum experiments seem to defy common sense, and I'll lay out a few for you, just to give you the flavor. First, on the subatomic level, effect sometimes comes before cause. In other words, an event can happen before the reason for it ever occurs. Equally odd ... in an experiment with a human observer, subatomic particles behave differently from the way they behave when the experiment is unobserved while in progress and the results are examined only after the fact-which might suggest that human will, even subconsciously expressed, shapes reality." "Holding fast to the boy's right foot, Jacob observed that one elevator might descend safely but that if they took two, one or the other was certain to crash to the bottom of the shaft, considering the unreliability of all machinery made by man.. "Then I'll attend to everything right away," the doctor said, reaching for the privacy curtain that surrounded the ER bed.. Daylight had retreated from the windows. Winter night, wound in scarfs of fog, like a leprous mendicant, rattled out a breath as though begging their attention beyond the glass.. Caesar Zedd teaches that every experience in our lives, unto the smallest moment and simplest act, is preserved in memory, including every witless conversation we've ever endured with the worst dullards we've met. For this reason, he wrote a book about why we must never suffer bores and fools and about how we can be rid of them, offering hundreds of strategies for scouring them from our lives, including homicide, which he claims to favor, though only tongue-in-cheek.. unwittingly oversell any strong reaction, striking a false note and raising suspicions.. If the nun and the nurse could know the loathing that Celestina had felt earlier, they would never allow her here in the creche, never trust her with this newborn.. "September 27, 1962. Barcelona, Spain. A flood killed four hundred forty-five people." Eventually he found himself alone at the large viewing window of the neonatal-care unit. Seven newborns were in residence. Fixed to the foot of each of the seven bassinets was a placard on which was printed the name of the baby.. Likewise, she wasn't prepared to deal with a monster like the father, if one day he came for Angel. And he would come. She knew. In these events as in all things, Celestina White glimpsed a pattern, complex and mysterious, and to the eye of an artist, the symmetry of the design required that one day the father would come. She wasn't prepared to deal with the creep now, but by the time that he arrived, she would be ready for him.. Though she worried that reading would strain his eyes, worsening his condition, she recognized the irrationality of her fear. Muscles don't atrophy from use, nor eyes wear out from too much seeing.. 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.. "If he gets back within the next hour, better ring me at his place so I can scoot." Agnes wasn't able to interpret his expression, not because he was in the least difficult to read, but because her perceptions were skewed by sudden fear and a flood of adrenaline. Her heart seemed to spin like a flywheel in her breast.. Your deeds ... will return to you, magnified beyond imagining ... the spirit of Bartholomew ... will find you ... and mete out the terrible judgment that you deserve.. Wally and Celestina went to dinner at the Armenian restaurant from which he'd gotten takeout on the day in '65 that he rescued her and Angel from Neddy Gnathic. Red tablecloths, white dishes, dark wood paneling, a cluster of candles in red glasses on each table, air redolent of garlic and roasted peppers and cubeb and sizzling soujouk-plus a personable staff, largely of the owners' family-created an atmosphere as right for celebration as for intimate conversation, and Celestina expected to enjoy both, because this promised to be a most momentous day in more ways than one.. He might suspect, but he couldn't know. He would but would be left with at least a shred of doubt about Junior's.. Gazing into the mirror, which ought to have been clouded with self-pity as though with steam, Junior Cain searched for his anger and found it. This was a black and bitter anger, as poisonous as rattlesnake venom; with little difficulty, his heart was distilling it into purest rage.. From the door to the sink, nervously fishing a plastic pharmacy bottle out of a coat pocket, Junior counseled himself to remain calm. Slow deep breaths. What's done is done. Live in the future. Act, don't react. Focus. Look for the bright side.. Angel. A less exotic synonym for her own name. Seraphim's angel. The angel of an angel.. IN NEED OF OIL, the hand crank squeaked, but the tall halves of the casement window parted and opened outward into the alleyway.. "You'll be out of ICU tomorrow, I bet. You'll have a phone, I'll call. And I'll come soon as I can." In the tree, the girl grinned. "Even if he stays up there until dawn, he'll still be coming down in the dark, won't he. Oh, we'll be fine, Aunt Aggie.. So after waiting two months for the superhot Harrison White case to cool down, Junior returned instead to Spruce Hills, traveled bald and pocked and passing as Pinchbeck, under the cover of night.. EVERY MOTHER BELIEVES that her baby is breathtakingly beautiful. She will remain unshakably convinced of this even if she lives to be a centenarian and her child has been harrowed by eight hard decades of gravity and experience.. Agnes had the craziest notion that he was counting them, when at is age, Of course, he would have no concept of numbers.. Certain that he was overreacting, Tom nevertheless left the kitchen as a cop, not a priest, would leave it: staying low, knife thrust in front of him, clearing the doorframe fast.. For a driver who had just engaged in a demolition derby with a house, the mummified man was steady on his feet and unhesitant in his actions. He turned to Harrison White and shot him twice in the chest.. Blink, the living room. Turning off Sinatra halfway through "It Gets Lonely Early." The rocking chair stopped squeaking under her. She heard the sincerity in Vinnie's voice, and as her disbelief dissolved, she was shocked into immobility. She whispered, "My little superstition." Koko skidded to a halt, perplexed, looked left, looked right, floppy ears lifted slightly to catch any sound of Mistress Mary.. The lack of offensive odors indicated that he hadn't landed in a container filled with organic garbage. In the blackness, judging only by feel, he decided that almost everything was in plastic trash bags, the contents of which were relatively soft-probably paper refuse.. Finally he switched on the light, and illuminated Neddy at ease, silent in death as never in life: lying on his back, head turned to the right, swollen tongue

lolling obscenely..After adjusting the hairpin that held her lace mantilla, Maria passed from the narthex into the nave She dipped two fingers in the holy water that glimmered in the marble font, and crossed herself..For all his brilliance, however, he was still a boy who loved to run and jump and tumble. Who swung from the backyard oak tree in a rope-and-tire swing. Who was thrilled when given a tricycle. Who giggled in delight while watching his uncle Jacob roll a shiny quarter end over-end across his knuckles and perform other simple coin tricks..This Monday afternoon, he longed for the escape and solace of half-hour pulp adventure. But he decided that he ought to at last compose the letter he'd been meaning to write for at least ten days..She searched the child's unfocused eyes for some sign of the hateful father's wickedness..Professional magic was not a field in which many Negroes could find their way to success. Obadiah was one of a rare brotherhood..No inquiring voice echoed off the passage walls, no accusatory shout. He was alone with the cadaver in this mist-shrouded moment of the metropolitan night-but perhaps not for long..Not many men wore hats these days. Since his teenage years, Nolly had favored a porkpie model. San Francisco was often chilly, and he began losing his hair when still young..At her touch, she felt a tension go out of the doctor. His hands slipped from his face, and he turned to her, shuddering not with fear but with what might have been relief..Celestina checked her wristwatch and saw that she was running late. With Angel's short legs and layers of red, there was no point in trying to hurry..The musician had no talent for deception. His hopping-hen eyes pecked at the nearest painting, at other guests, down at the floor, everywhere but directly at Junior, and a nerve twitched in his left cheek. "Well, I'm very good, you know, at faces, they stick with me, I don't know why. Goodness knows, my memory is otherwise shot."..For Agnes and Barty, one stop remained, where some of the joy of Christmas would always be buried with the husband that she still missed every day and the father that he would never know..Her shaking threatened her composure. She was Barty's mother and father, his only rock, and she must always be strong for him. She clenched her teeth and tensed her body and gradually quieted the tremors by an act of will..Paul recalled the letter he had written to Reverend Harrison White a couple weeks after the death of Joey Lampion. He'd carried it home from the pharmacy on the day that Perri died, to ask for her opinion of it. The letter had never been mailed..The study was the size of a bathroom. The cramped space barely allowed for a battered pine desk, a chair, and one filing cabinet..A trickster, this detective. Full of taunts and feints and sly stratagems. Psychological-warfare artist..Fathoms of silence flooded the line. Still, she listened. He sensed her there, though as if at a great depth..Thrusting his finger toward the table with each repetition of the word, Barty happily insisted, "Pie, pie, pie, pie, pie, pie, pie, pie."..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..Artificial eyes were on order. He would soon return to Newport Beach for a third fitting before implant. They weren't glass, as commonly believed, but thin plastic shells that fit neatly behind the eyelids in the cavities left after surgery. On the inner surface of the transparent artificial cornea, the artificial iris would be skillfully hand-painted, and movement of the ocular prosthesis could be achieved by attaching the eye-moving muscles to the conjunctiva..The modulated electronic brrrrr was similar to the sound of the telephone in Vanadium's cramped study, on Sunday night. Junior was transported back to that place, that moment in time..He knew she wouldn't just step back to calculate her batting average, so he rolled at once, out of her way, immensely relieved that he could move, because judging by the pain coruscating across his back, he wouldn't have been surprised if she had broken his spine and paralyzed him. The chair crashed down again, exactly where Junior had been sprawled an instant before.."Be quiet, sugarpie," she said, crossing the bedroom to the door, which stood only slightly ajar..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.".."You must be thinking of someone else," she said, pushing a wad of bills into his hand. "Me, I'm a jellyfish in high heels.".."Where's your mother this morning?" he asked, for he'd expected to have to shoot his way through a lot more than one adult to reach both children. The Lipscomb house had proved empty, however, and fortune had given him the boy and girl together, with one guardian..tasteful hint of it was on display; nothing about this beauty could be called cheap..Many claimed Maharion's throne, but none could keep it, and the quarrels of the claimants divided all loyalties. No commonwealth was left and no justice, only the will of the wealthy. Men of noble houses, merchants, and pirates, any who could hire soldiers and wizards called himself a lord, claiming lands and cities as his property. The warlords made those they conquered slaves, and those they hired were in truth slaves, having only their masters to safeguard them from rival warlords seizing the lands, and sea-pirates raiding the ports, and bands and hordes of lawless, miserable men dispossessed of their living, driven by hunger to raid and rob."..Wednesday, with a swiftness that confirmed its eagerness to make a deal, the state supplied records on the fire tower. For five years, a significant portion of the maintenance funds had been diverted by bureaucrats to other uses. And for three years, the responsible maintenance supervisor filed an annual report on this specific tower, requesting immediate funds for fundamental reconstruction; the third of these documents, submitted eleven months prior to Naomi's fall, was composed in crisis language and stamped urgent..According to the cards, Barty would be rich financially, but also in talent, spirit, intellect. Rich in courage and honor, Maria promised. With a wealth of common sense, good judgment, and luck..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..Finally Angel dropped and slithered, vanishing under the overhanging bedclothes

with a final flurry of yellow socks..He had nothing against men or women of color. Live and let live. One earth, one people. All of that..Without commenting, Tom continued: "And worlds just like ours-except that my parents never met, and I was never born. Worlds in which Wally was never shot because he was too unsure of himself or just too stupid to take Celestina to dinner that night or to ask her to marry him."..Retracing his path across the kitchen, he caught a faint whiff of jasmine from the backyard. Funny, jasmine here inside. Two paces later, he felt a draft..Junior kept a file on each man, nevertheless, in case instinct later told him that one of them was, in fact, his mortal enemy. He could have killed all of them, just to be safe, but a multitude of dead Bartholomews, even spread over several jurisdictions, would sooner or later attract too much police attention..Tom Vanadium liked this man at once. Cop instinct told him that Damascus was honest and reliable. Priestly insight suggested even more impressive qualities..She approached the kitchen table and swept her hand across it, to emphasize its emptiness..Nolly raised his martini glass in a toast. "To Kathleen Klerkle Wulfstan, dentist and associate detective."..Forward, under the spreading black branches of the massive tree, receiving continuous green-tongued murmurs of encouragement from the breeze-stirred leaves, Barty was Barty, determined and undaunted..Hound shrugged. He didn't choose to tell Losen that people hated him disinterestedly..The dining room again, but this time he remembered how he had gotten here: by way of the living room..So it became dangerous to practice sorcery, except under the protection of a strong warlord; and even then, if a wizard met up with one whose powers were greater than his own, he might be destroyed. And if a wizard let down his guard among the common folk, they too might destroy him if they could, seeing him as the source of the worst evils they suffered, a malign being. In those years, in the minds of most people, all magic was black.."It was. But maybe that's not the whole story. Anyway, we know the usual poses these guys strike, the attitudes they think are deceptive and clever. Most of them are so obvious, they might as well just stick their willy in a light socket and save us a lot of trouble. This, however, is a new approach. Tends to make you want to believe in the poor guy."..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.

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