

JOURNEY TO RESTORATION

WHILE THE SLATS of ash-gray light slowly lost their meager luster, and sable shadows metastasized in sinister profusion, the sentinel silence remained unbroken between Junior Cain and the birthmarked man.. "Or at least, if the police knew the truth at that time, they hadn't yet gone public with it. I had no reason to mention it to you back then. I didn't even know Vanadium was missing." He couldn't work up sufficient saliva to get the rasp out of his voice: "Then you could learn to do it." One of the most unnerving aspects of life in southern California was that earthquake weather came in so many varieties. As many days as not, you got out of bed, checked the sky and the barometer, and realized with dismay that conditions were indicative of catastrophe.. She thought that she already knew all about humility, about the necessity of it, about the power of it to bring peace of mind and to heal the heart, but in the following few minutes, she learned more about humility than she had ever known before.. on both sides of the property, the neighbors can't see, but some know, have always known, and have less interest. madness or a brilliant deductive insight: Naomi, the hateful bitch, she poisoned me!. The end of his quest was near, so near, the right Bartholomew almost within 'mullet range. He was furious with Neddy Gnathic for possibly screwing this up.. Leaving Frieda unconscious and reeking, a condition in which her bralessness had no power to arouse him, Junior left.. daughter's existence. Angel, if that's what she were eventually to be named, lived under a threat as surely as had all the children of Bethlehem, who'd been slain according to the decree of King Herod. The baby curled one small hand around her aunt's index finger. So tiny, fragile, she nonetheless gripped with surprising tenacity.. The Finder. With a nimbleness and an alacrity that a lemur would have admired, the girl ascended to the first crotch.. To the window in the driver's door, Barty came with a repertoire of comic expressions, mugging at his mother, sticking one finger up his nose and exaggeratedly boring with it as though exploring for nasal nuggets. "Not scary, Mommy!" Alone with Paul, as he stood abashed, she removed her blouse and bra and, with arms crossed over her breasts, revealed to him her savaged back. Whereas her father had used open-hand slaps and hard fists to teach his twin sons the lessons of God, he preferred canes and lashes as the instruments of education for his daughter, because he believed that his direct touch might have invited sin. Scars disfigured Agnes from shoulders to buttocks, pale scars and others dark, crosshatched and whorled.. 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." 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." Under Celestina's guidance, the menfolk-Wally, Edom, Jacob, Paul, Tom-had packed cartons of canned and dry goods, plus numerous boxes of new spring clothing for the children on their route. All those items had been loaded into the vehicles the previous evening.. As Sklent so insightfully put it: Some of us live on after death, survive in spirit, because we are just too stubborn, selfish, greedy, grubbing, vicious, psychotic, and evil to accept our demise. None of those qualities described sweet Naomi, who had been far too kind and loving and meek to live on in spirit, after her lovely flesh failed. Now at one with the earth, Naomi was no threat to Junior, and the state had paid for its negligence in her death, and the whole matter should have been brought to closure. There were only two barriers to full and final resolution: first, the stubborn, selfish, greedy, grubbing, vicious, psychotic, evil spirit of Thomas Vanadium; and second, Seraphim's bastard baby--little Bartholomew.. "I believe I'll just wait here until Mr. Cain wakes," Vanadium said. "I've nothing more pressing to do." "Would you pretend to wake up if I tried to smother you?" asked Detective Vanadium.. White's paintings, which Junior found naive, dull, and insipid in the extreme. She imbued her work with all the qualities that real artists disdained: realistic detail, storytelling, beauty, optimism, and even charm.. "I'm wondering," Nolly said, "if you're not an officer of the law anymore, in what capacity are you going to pursue Cain?" During the ten days since Joey's passing, a great many people had conveyed their condolences to Agnes, but until this man, she'd known all of them.. The artist, six feet four and two hundred fifty pounds, looked markedly more dangerous in person than in his scary publicity photo. Still in his twenties, he had white hair that fell limp and straight to his shoulders. Dead-white skin. His deep-set eyes, as silver-gray as rain with an albino-pink undertone, had a predatory glint as chilling as that in the eyes of a panther. Terrible scars slashed his face, and red hash marks covered his big hands, as though he'd frequently defended himself barehanded against men armed with swords.. "Well, with so much on His shoulders, He can't always watch us directly, you know, with His fullest attention every minute, but He's always at least watching from the corner of His eye. You'll be all right. I know you will." Tom was an Oregon State Police detective, as far as Celestina knew, and she didn't understand what he was doing here.. "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." "Longer to wait between Christmases," she said. "And between birthdays. I'd save a bunch of money on gifts." For a while he enjoyed being challenged to figure the number of seconds elapsed since a particular historical event. Given the date, he did the calculations in his head, providing a correct answer in as little as twenty seconds, rarely taking more than a minute.. 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." A shiver of awe traveled Celestina's spine, because she knew what the physician's next words would surely be.. No doubt thinking about the land of the big bugs, into which she had pushed Enoch Cain, which was exactly what Barty had suddenly thought about, Angel said, "Honey, this is amazing, it's wonderful, but you've got to be careful." She started to get up from the chair behind the desk, but he encouraged her to stay seated.. He phoned her before leaving, to be sure she

was home. She didn't work weekend shifts at the hospital; but maybe she would have gone out on this night off. When she answered, he recognized her seductive voice-and devilishly muttered, "Wrong number." "Phimie said the creep thought it was funny, but using Daddy's voice as background music also ... well, aroused him, maybe because it further humiliated her and because he knew it would humiliate our father. But we never told Daddy that part of it. Neither of us saw any useful reason for telling him." Her eyes, lustrous pools, brimmed with the need to know, but she respected the deal. "I only half understood all that, and I don't even know which half, but in some strange way, it feels true. Thank you. I will think about it tonight, when I can't sleep." She stepped close and kissed him on the cheek. "Who are you, Tom Vanadium?" The car shuddered, wrenched steel screamed, and a cry of triumph rose from the rescuers..He wanted the most expensive box for Joey; but Joey, a modest and prudent man, would have disapproved. Instead, he selected a handsome but not ornate casket just above the median price..She asked Edom to stay in the main house, so Barty wouldn't be alone while she visited Maria Gonzalez for an hour or two. He was pleased to oblige, settling down to watch a television documentary about volcanoes, which promised to include stories about the 1902 eruption of Mont Pelee, on Martinique, which killed 28,000 people within minutes, and other disasters of colossal proportions..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..Celestina threw down the weapon even before she turned, and as two cops entered the room, she cried, "He's getting away!" In the neatly ordered bedroom, he removed his shoes. Stretching out on the bed, he stared at the ceiling, feeling useless..He stopped for lunch at a restaurant with a spectacular view of the Pacific, framed by massive pines..Later, in early '66, out of his coma and recovering sufficiently to have visitors, Vanadium spent a most difficult hour with his old friend Harrison White. Out of respect for the memory of his lost daughter, and not at all out of concern for his image as a minister, the reverend had refused to acknowledge either that Seraphim had been pregnant or that she'd been raped-although Max Bellini had already confirmed the pregnancy and believed, based on cop's instinct, that it had been the consequence of rape. Harrison's attitude seemed to be that Phimie was gone, that' nothing could be gained by opening this wound, and that even if there was a villain involved, the Christian thing was to forgive, if not forget, and to trust in divine justice..Turning his patched eyes in the general direction of his mother, Barty said, "Oops." He was a virile young man, desired by many, and life was short. Poor Naomi, her lovely face and her look of shock still fresh in his memory, was a constant reminder of how suddenly the end could come. No one was guaranteed tomorrow. Seize the day..She struggled, wept, pretended disgust, faked shame, swore to bring the police down on him. Another man, not as highly skilled at reading men as Junior, might have thought the girl's resistance was genuine, Sat her charges of rape were sincere. Any other man might have backed off, but Junior was neither fooled nor confused..Tuesday, January 9, having cashed out a number of investments during the past ten days, Junior made a wire transfer of one and a half million dollars to the Gammoner account in the Grand Cayman bank..Edom, who had never made it big, medium, or little, watched his sister blur before him. He strove to contain the shimmering hotness in his eyes. His love was not for magic, and his pride was not in any skill he possessed, for he possessed none worth noting. His love was for his good sister; she was his pride, too, and he felt that his small life had precious meaning as long as he was able to drive her on days like this, carry her pies, and occasionally make her smile..Like all women past puberty and this side of the grave, she was attracted to him. She never told him as much, not in words, but he detected this attraction in the way she looked at him, in the tone that she used when she spoke his name. Throughout three weeks of therapy, Seraphim revealed countless small but significant proofs of her desire..In a monotone that gave new meaning to deadpan, the detective added: "I'm the only one who was there who doesn't have a dry-cleaning bill." "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." 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..Not that he failed to perform well. As always, he was a bull, a stallion, an insatiable satyr. None of his lovers complained; none had the energy for complaint when he'd finished with them..Maybe he would get lucky, and an airliner would fall out of the sky right now, right here, obliterating him in an instant..A music tradition was deeply rooted in the Negro community. No similar tradition in magic existed..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 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..The telephone was operative, and Vanadium dialed the number of the building superintendent, Sparky Vox. Sparky had an apartment in the basement, on the upper of two subterranean floors, adjacent to the garage entrance..A moment ago, he'd slammed into Angel's room, and that was loud, but this boomed louder, thunderous enough to wake people throughout the building.."Done," Agnes said. "Now put away the three dollars, and let's have our lesson before my water breaks." Posing as a counselor with Catholic Family Services, he phoned each listed Bartholomew, with a question related to his or her recent adoption. Those who expressed bafflement, and who claimed not to have adopted a child, were generally stricken from his list..Although he found Magusson's face sufficiently disturbing that he avoided looking at it more than

necessary, and though Magusson's bulging eyes were so moist with bitterness and with need that they inspired nightmares, Junior shifted his gaze from his half-numb hands to his attorney. "Luck? I lost my wife. And my unborn baby." More than once, a passing nurse stopped to check on him and to advise him not to exhaust himself. WITH A CRASH as loud as the dire crack of heaven opening on Judgment Day, the Ford pickup broadsided the Pontiac. Agnes couldn't hear the first fraction of her scream, and not much of the rest of it, either, as I Junior was aware that all the cops were watching him as he stared down at the body, and he frantically tried to think what an innocent husband would be likely to do or say, but his imagination failed him. His thoughts could not be organized. Harrison and Grace had welcomed him in spite of the fact that a friend and parishioner had died on Thursday, leaving them both bereft and with church obligations. This was tedious work and might not bear fruit. He needed to begin somewhere, however, and the telephone directory was the most logical starting point. As though frightened of the gentle certainty in Celestina's eyes, the doctor turned away from her, and toward the window once more. He told her that he loved her, and she slipped away upon his words. As she went, the haggard look of the terminal leukemic patient passed from her, and before the gray mask of death replaced it, he saw the beauty he had preserved in memory when he was three, before they took his eyes, saw it so briefly, as if something transforming welled out of her, a perfect light, her essence. Kennedy, whose portraits hung side by side, the girl revealed to their mom and dad what had been done to her and also what, in her despair. Now her mooring was Wally Lipscomb-obstetrician, pediatrician, landlord, and best friend--who arrived halfway through the reception. As she listened to Helen Greenbaum's sales report, Celestina held Wally's hand so tightly that had it been a plastic champagne flute, it would have cracked. Or perhaps the sorrow was less sadness than yearning. He had to move on, but he was loath to begin this strange journey without her. "Usually, I throw out a bunch of hocus-pocus, flourishes and patter, to distract people, so they don't even realize that what they've seen was real. They think the midair disappearance is just a trick." A knife already lay on the counter nearby. He used it to slice four pats of butter, yellow and creamy, each half an inch thick, off the end of the stick. Edom felt uneasy in this kingdom of a strange god. The god that his brother feared was humanity, its dark compulsions, its arrogance. Edom, on the other hand, trembled before Nature, whose wrath was so great that one day she would destroy all things, when the universe collapsed into a super dense nugget of matter the size of a pea. 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. A surprising number of the women who had been his lovers were recreational drug users, and over the past couple years, he had met several dealers who supplied them. From the least savory of these, he purchased five thousand dollars' worth of cocaine and LSD to establish his credibility, after which he inquired about forged documents. He capped the bottle, pocketed it, and then kicked the dead man, kicked him again, and spat on him. When Paul arrived with a Christmas gift, Perri was abed, wearing Chinese-red pajamas, reading Jane Austen. A clever contraption of leather straps, pulleys, and counterweights assisted her in moving her right arm more fluidly than would otherwise have been possible. A lap stand held the book, but she could not tam the pages. At first light, a nurse arrived to perform preliminary surgical prep on Barty. She pulled the boy's hair back and captured it under a tight fitting cap. With cream and a safety razor, she shaved off his eyebrows. Slow deep breathing forgotten, gasping like a drowning swimmer, a sudden sweat dripping from his brow, Junior used one foot to prod the fallen man. "By the close of business tomorrow," said the lawyer, "I expect to have an offer for your consideration." He slipped behind the door and raised the pewter candlestick over his head. Weighing perhaps five pounds, the object made a formidable bludgeon, almost as good as a hammer. If the ace of diamonds, in quartet, must be taken seriously, then why not the rest of the draw? In the kitchen, he sat her in a chair and let her slump forward over the breakfast table. With her arms folded, with her head on her arms and turned to one side, she appeared to be resting. Scamp spent Wednesday ravishing him. It wasn't love, but there was comfort in being familiar with his partner's equipment. Admitting to the likelihood that he would never again devote himself seriously to his business, Paul sold it to Jim Kessel, long his good right hand and fellow pharmacist. even allow himself as much as a lascivious wink or a quick caress of Victoria's hand. This thought startled Agnes, disturbed her-yet, inexplicably, it also poured a measure of warm comfort into her chilled heart. Wet cobblestones and tattered blacktop. Hurry, hurry. Past the lighted casement window in the gallery men's room. Before he searched the bedroom, Vanadium walked quickly back through the rooms that he had already inspected, suddenly remembering the three bizarre paintings of which Nolly, Kathleen, and Sparky had spoken, and wondering how he could have overlooked them. They were not here. He was able to locate, however, the places on the walls where the art works had hung, because the nails still bristled from the pocket plaster, and picture hooks dangled from the nails. Following a month of recuperation and postoperative medical care, Junior was able to return to his twice-a-week classes in art appreciation. He resumed, as well, his almost daily strolls through the city's better galleries and fine museums. He shook his head. "I think he's evil, not crazy. And stupid in the way that evil often is. Too arrogant and too vain to be aware of his stupidity-and therefore always tangled up in traps of his own making. But nonetheless dangerous for being stupid. In fact, far more dangerous than a wiser man with a sense of consequences." She told them of Phimie's request that the baby be named Angel. "At the time, I assumed she wasn't able to think clearly because of the stroke. The sleeves of the pajama top were pushed up, revealing more of the disease's vicious work. The muscles of her useless left arm had atrophied; the once graceful hand curled in upon itself, as though holding an invisible object, perhaps the hope she never abandoned. Then came the Year of the Tiger, 1974. Gasoline shortages, panic buying, mile-long lines at service stations. Patty Hearst kidnapped. Nixon gone in disgrace. Hank Aaron toppled Babe Ruth's longstanding home-run record, and the inflation rate topped fifteen percent, and the

legendary Muhammad Ali defeated George Foreman to regain his world-heavyweight title..Lowering his surgical mask, Dr. Lipscomb approached Celestina, where she stood with her back pressed to the wall..For a while he thought the fear would end only when he perished from it, but eventually it faded, and in its place poured forth self-pity from a bottomless well. Self-pity, of course, is the ideal fuel for anger; which was why, pursuing the Buick through fog, climbing now toward Pacific Heights, Junior was in a murderous rage. By the time he reached Cain's bedroom, Tom Vanadium recognized that the austere decor of the apartment had probably been inspired by the minimalism that the wife killer had noted in the detective's own house in Spruce Hills. This was an uncanny discovery, troubling for reasons that Vanadium couldn't entirely define, but he remained convinced that his perception was correct.."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."The six-foot-tall statue was of a nude woman, formed from scrap metal, some of it rusted and otherwise corroded. The feet were made from gear wheels of various sizes and from bent blades of broken meat cleavers. Pistons, pipes, and barbed wire formed her legs. She was busty: hammered soup pots as breasts, corkscrews as nipples. Rake-tine hands were crossed defensively over the misshapen bosom. In a face sculpted from bent forks and fan blades, empty black eye sockets glared with hideous suffering, and a wide-mouthed shriek accused the world with a silent but profound cry of horror..Three times, Mary vanished, and three times she reappeared, before she led the bamboozled Koko to her mother and father. "Neat, huh?".He yearned for a new heart mate. He was wise enough to know that no amount of yearning could transform the wrong woman into the right one. Love couldn't be demanded, planned, or manufactured. Love always came as a surprise, snuck up on you when you were least expecting it, like Anthony Perkins in a dress..In spite of its dazzle and power and comfort, however, the car was not able to lift his spirits as he cruised the hills of the city. Somewhere along these darkly glistening streets, in these houses and high-rises clinging to steep slopes awaiting seismic sundering, the boy was sheltered: half Negro, half white, full doom to Junior Cain..She realized she hadn't turned on the radio. Before she could reach for the switch, she was asleep..In the first drawer, he discovered an address book. Logically, Vanadium would have taken this with him, even if on the lam from a murder rap, so Junior tucked it in his jacket pocket..For the next few days, they would eat all their meals in the suite. Most likely, Cain had left San Francisco. And even if the killer hadn't fled, this was a big city, where a chance encounter with him was unlikely. Yet having, assumed the role of guardian, Tom Vanadium had a zero tolerance for risk, because the inimitable Mr. Cain had proved himself to be a master of the unlikely..Before he taught himself to read books, he also taught himself numbers, and then how to read a clock. The significance of time had a more profound impact on him than Agnes could understand, perhaps because acquiring an awareness of the infinite nature of the universe and the finite nature of each human life-and fully understanding the implications of this knowledge-takes most of us till early adulthood if not later, whereas for Barty, the vast glories of the universe and the comparatively humble nature of human existence were recognized, contemplated, and absorbed in a matter of weeks..The mummified moon had unwound itself from its rags of embalming clouds. Its pocked face glowered in full brightness on the spreading branches of the pine, on the yard, and on the graveled driveway..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..Agnes met them, pulling Grace and Angel to her side. Her eyes were bright with excitement. "Tom, you're a man of faith, even if you've sometimes been troubled in it. Tell me what you make of all this."On Tuesday, January 2, Junior met with the drug dealer who had introduced him to Google, the document forger, and he arranged to purchase a 9-mm handgun with custom-machined silencer..And in time, the surgeon did appear, bearing the good news that neither of the malignancies had spread to the orbit and optic nerve, but he had no greater miracle to report..Lipscomb said, "We're only two and a half blocks from the best Armenian restaurant in the city. I'll dash over there, bring back some chilled bubbly and an early dinner, if you'll allow me."By now he recognized that the man approaching from the other graveside service was neither a Negro nor a stranger. Detective Thomas Vanadium was annoying enough to be an honorary Hackachak..He found nothing especially gratifying, switched off the lights, and moved on to the living room. If Cain was coming home, he could glance up from the street and see lights ablaze here, so Vanadium resorted to a small flashlight, always carefully hooding the lens with one hand..He switched on his flashlight. In the beam, on the blacktop, a silver disc. Like a full moon in a night sky..Designed by Linda Lockowitz Text set in Adobe Jenson First edition ACBGIKJHFDB.Waste of time to check those places. More likely, woman and boy were hiding in the last room..Harrison was a Baptist, Vanadium a Catholic, and although they approached the same faith from different angles, they weren't coming to it from different planets, which was the feeling Vanadium had been left with following their conversation. It was true that Enoch Cain could never be brought successfully to trial for the rape of Phimie, subsequent to her death and in the absence of her testimony. And it was also uncomfortably true that exploring the possibility that Cain was the rapist would tear open the wounds in the hearts of everyone in the White family, to no useful effect. Nevertheless, to rely on divine justice alone seemed naive, if not morally questionable..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..Junior could almost feel sorry for this sad, stocky, haunted detective, deranged by years of difficult public service.."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!"..inking? The sequined and tasseled hat of fame was too gaudy for her; she was a minister's daughter, from Spruce Hills, Oregon, more comfortable in a baseball cap.

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