

NACH DEM WORT DAS BER HRT INTERSUBJEKTIVIT T UND FOKUS IM PSYCHOSOM

"Sulk away," the man said. "If you don't like this work, there's always the roaster." Celestina turned in her seat to look back at Wally and Angel, who were waving. "I guess I am." The infant's smile was so captivating and his puzzlement so comically earnest that both expressions worked on Agnes's misery as surely as yeast leavens dough. Her bitter tears turned sweet. 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. "I get frustrated," he admitted. "Trying to learn how to do things in the dark ... I get pee'd off, as they say." For a while, Junior profited enormously from Tammy's investment advice, and the sex was great. As a thank-you for the hefty trading commissions she earned-and not incidentally for all the orgasms-Tammy gave him a Rolex. He didn't mind her four cats, didn't even care when the four grew to six, then to eight. Although not quite as young as Bavo Poriferan, this artist was equally adored by critics and widely regarded as a genius. He went by a single and mysterious name, Sklent, and in the publicity photo of him that was posted in the gallery, he looked dangerous. The problem was Celestina in the Buick, because when she saw what was happening, she might slide behind the steering wheel and speed away. The engine was running, white plumage rising from the tailpipe and feathering away in the fog, so she might escape if she was a quick thinker. As always, curious about how others lived-or, in this case, bad lived-Junior explored the house, poking in drawers and closets. For a widower, Bartholomew Prosser was neat and well-organized. She must have sensed his assessment of her and realized that she had little chance of charming him, for she turned at once away and never looked in his direction again. To her mother, Celestina said, "What did you mean when you said you'd heard all about Barty here?" STILL WEARING HIS white pharmacy smock over a white shirt and black slacks, striding purposefully along the streets of Bright Beach, under a malignant-gray twilight sky worthy of a Weird Tales cover, with ominous accompanying rhythm provided by wind-clattered palm fronds overhead, Paul Damascus headed home for the day. He liked her face, too. She wore no makeup, and pulled her brown hair back in a bun. Some might say she was mousy, but the only things mousy that Nolly saw about her were a piquant tilt to her nose and a certain cuteness. Thanksgiving dinner was a fine affair, and Christmas was even better. On New Year's Eve, Wally downed one drink too many and more than once offered to perform surgery on any member of the family, free of charge "right here, right now," as long as the procedure was within his area of expertise. Barty sat at the kitchen table, reading *Between Planets*. From time to time, Agnes discovered him watching her at work or studying Maria's face and her dexterous hands. Apparently, he'd been drooling for a long time. Where his chin and throat were not sticky, a crust of dried saliva glazed his skin. From serviceway to alley to serviceway to street, into the city and the fog and the night, Junior ran from the Cain past into the Pinchbeck future. Angel brightened at the sight of the coin turning end-over-end across his knuckles. "I could learn to do that," she asserted. During the drive, he alternated between great gales of delighted laughter and racking sobs wrought by pain and self-pity. The voodoo Baptist was dead, the curse broken with the death of he who had cast it. Yet Junior must endure this final devastating plague. The detective shrugged. "The girl might've had her baby at a third rate hospital, one with poor control of patients' records and a less professional staff. Or the kid might have been placed for adoption through some baby brokerage in it strictly for the money. Then there would've been opportunities to learn something. But as soon as I discovered it was St. Mary's, I knew we were screwed." Under other circumstances, Agnes might have blushed, but now her apparently irrational fear of too much life insurance had been vindicated. "What aren't you telling us?" her mother pressed, intuiting the existence of a larger story, if not the amazing nature of it. 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. After carrying the two pieces of luggage to the car in the garage, he returned to the study. He sat at the desk and examined the contents of the drawers, then turned to the file cabinet. After two years of rehabilitation, Tom had been pronounced as fit as ever, a miracle of modern medicine and willpower. But right now he seemed to have been put back together with spit and string and Scotch tape. Arms pumping, legs stretching, he felt every one of those eight months of coma in his withered-and-rebuilt muscles, in his calcium depleted-and-rebuilt bones. "Guilt," said the detective. "If he killed her, wouldn't an overwhelming sense of guilt be as likely as anguish to cause acute nervous emesis?" 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. He was immensely weary, limp. He felt oppressed, as though a great weight were piled on him. Even keeping his eyes open was tiring. In the face of his kindness, however, she couldn't refuse his request. She nodded. "There's lots of places where I don't have bad eyes at all. And then lots of places where I have it worse or don't have it as bad, but still have it some." This brilliant mouthful was not nature's work alone. With what Nolly must have spent to obtain this smile, some fortunate dentist had kept a mistress in jewelry through her most nubile years. 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." "Would you like a little tea and a piece of crumb cake?" Grace asked as smoothly as if, in *The Big Book of Etiquette for Ministers' Wives*, this were the preferred response to the announcement of a startling career change. He stood at a window, staring down into the street, his profile to her, and in his silence he searched for the words to describe the "something extraordinary" that he had mentioned earlier. Instead of sitting behind his desk, he settled into the second of two patient chairs, beside her. This, too, indicated bad news. Out of Phimie's humiliation, terror, suffering, and death had come Angel, whom

Celestina had first and briefly hated, but whom now she loved more than she loved Wally, more than she loved herself or even life itself. Phimie, through Angel, had brought Celestina both to Wally and to a fuller understanding of their father's meaning when he spoke of this momentous day, an understanding that brought power to her painting and so deeply touched the people who saw and bought her art..Not every coincidence, however, has meaning. Toss a quarter one million times, roughly half a million heads will turn up, roughly the same number of tails. In the process, there will be instances when heads turn up thirty, forty, a hundred times in a row. This does not mean that destiny is at work or that God-choosing to be not merely his usual mysterious self but utterly inscrutable-is warning of Armageddon through the medium of the quarter; it means the laws of probability hold true only in the long run, and that short-run anomalies are meaningful solely to the gullible.. "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"..the stems, thorns sharp against his tongue. And then Agnes. Agnes in the yard, screaming.On his nightstand, he found an envelope evidently placed there by Hanna, after she'd taken it from his pharmacy smock, which he had given her to launder. The envelope contained the letter about Agnes Lampion that Paul had written to Reverend White in Oregon..He left by the back door, to avoid the aftermath seeping across the foyer floor. Fog enveloped him, cool and refreshing..Junior tipped his head back and gazed up toward the section of broken-out railing along the high observation deck..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.. "My little girl," she said, and belatedly she realized that this might not be a policeman, after all, but someone trying to determine if she and Angel were alone in the apartment..The traffic light turned green. Now onward home. Rolex recovered and bright upon his wrist, Junior Cain drove his Mercedes with a restraint that required more self-control than he had realized he could tap, even with the guidance of Zedd..The porch light wasn't on. No landscape lighting brightened the backyard. Barty was a gray shadow moving through darkness and through the darkling drizzle..Joey rested not under the stern watch of the cypresses, but near a California pepper tree. With its graceful, cascading boughs, it appeared to stand in meditation or in prayer..MONDAY EVENING, January 15, Paul Damascus arrived at the hotel in San Francisco with Grace White. He had kept watch over her in Spruce Hills for more than two days, sleeping on the floor in the hall outside her room both nights, remaining close by her side when she was in public. They stayed with friends of hers until Harrison's funeral this morning, then flew south for a reunion of mother and daughter..Each page comprised four columns of names and numbers, most with addresses. Approximately one hundred names filled each column, four hundred to a page..She expected him to be gone, snatched by an accomplice who had come in the back way while Deed had distracted her at the front door..Over the following hour, as Walter Panglo guided Jacob through the planning of the funeral, Jacob recounted the gruesome details of numerous airliner crashes, shipwrecks, train collisions, coal-mine disasters, darn collapses, hotel fires, nightclub fires, pipeline and oil-well explosions, munitions--plant explosions.....He paused, not sure how to proceed. He was not accustomed to writing letters to total strangers.. "Loved her? Of course I loved her. Naomi was beautiful and so kind ... and funny. She was the best ... the best thing that ever happened to me..".When the nurse was gone, alone with his mother as they waited for the orderly to bring a gurney, Barty said, "Come close..".The round table seated six, but they required only three chairs, because the two brainless friends were a pair of Angel's dolls..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 didn't have experience with guns, but having seen him trying to press cartridges into the magazine, she knew how to load. She inserted one round. Then a second. Enough..Tom himself had decided to build a new life here, as well, assisting Agnes with her ever-expanding work. He was not yet sure whether this would include the rededication to his vows and a return to the Roman collar, or whether he would spend the rest of his days in civvies. He was delaying that decision until the Cain case was resolved..Again, he cast his line of memory into murky waters nearly four years in the past, to the night of passion that he had shared with Seraphim in the parsonage. As before, he could recall nothing she'd said, only the exquisite look of her, the nubile perfection of her body..If that was the bright side, however, it was a piss-poor bright side (no pun intended), because he was still stuck in this men's room with a corpse, and he couldn't stay here for the rest of his life, surviving on tap water and paper-towel sandwiches but he couldn't leave the body to be found, either, because the police would be all over the gallery before the reception ended, before he had a chance to follow Celestina home..If he didn't find the Rolex and get back to his car before the reception ended, he'd forfeit his best chance of following Celestina to Bartholomew..Five days later, on Barty's birthday morning, when Agnes and EDOM were in the kitchen, making preparations for the visits that had earned her the affectionate title of Pie Lady, Barty was in his highchair, eating a vanilla wafer lightly dampened with milk. Each time a crumb fell from the cookie, the boy plucked it off the tray and neatly conveyed it to his tongue..He desperately needed closure in the matter of Naomi's death. That was what these past three years and these supernatural events were all about..Perhaps these two months of frustration had brought him to this: hair-trigger nerves, fevered imagination, and anticipation distilled into dread..His homely face was long and narrow, as though pulled into that shape by the weight of his responsibilities. In other circumstances, however, his generous mouth might have shaped an appealing smile; and his green eyes had in them the compassion of someone who himself had known great loss..In his entire life, Junior had never suffered this much pain without first having killed someone. Reluctant to depart until certain that his student was out of danger physically, emotionally, and mentally, Bob Chicane stayed until three thirty. When he left, he broke some bad news to Junior: "I can't keep you on my student list, man. I'm sorry, but you're

way too intense for me. Way too intense. Everything you do. All the women you run through, this whole art thing, whatever all those phone books are about-now even meditation. Way too intense for me, too obsessive. Sorry. Have a good life, man." Agnes winced. Already, another contraction. Mild but so soon after the last. She clasped her hands around her immense belly and took slow, deep breaths until the pain passed..Shuddering with dread, he placed one hand against the door and slowly pushed it open.."Oh, yes. When he phoned, Reverend Collins told me all about you and Bartholomew. At the front door, when I asked the boy's name, I already knew it and was just setting up this little trick for you." Celestina had a delayed reaction to Barty's name. An odd look came over her. "Barty? Short for ... Bartholomew?". Now he shuffled the first of the four decks precisely as he had shuffled the first deck on Friday evening, and he set it aside..Worse than the tenderness in the bones, the bleeding gums, the headaches, the ugly bruises, worse than the anemia-related weariness and the spells of breathlessness, was the suffering that her battle caused to those whom she loved. More frequently as the days passed, they were unable to conceal their worry and their sorrow. She held their hands when they trembled. She asked them to pray with her when they expressed anger that this should happen to her-of all people, to her, and she wouldn't let them go until the anger was gone. More than once, she pulled sweet Angel into her lap, stroked her hair, and soothed her with talk of all the good times shared in better days. And always Barty, watching over her in his blindness, aware that she would not be dying in all the places where she was, but taking no consolation from the fact that she would continue to exist in other worlds where he could never again be at her side..same," Agnes admonished. "Who's been raising you, sugarpie, if you don't know that? Are you going to pretend you've been brought up by wolves for nine years?". Strangely, as sometimes happened in this room, his missing toe itched. There was no point in removing his shoe and sock to scratch the stump, because that would provide no relief. Curiously, the itch was in the phantom toe itself, where it could never be scratched.."September 27, 1962. Barcelona, Spain. A flood killed four hundred forty-five people." 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 was uncharacteristically restive. His stoic nature, his long learned Jesuit philosophy regarding the acceptance of events as they unfold, and the acquired patience of a homicide detective were insufficient to prevent frustration from taking root in him. In the more than two months since Enoch Cain vanished, following the murder of Reverend White, no trace of the killer had been found. Week by week, the slender sapling of frustration had grown into a tree and then into a forest, until Tom began every morning by looking out through the tightly woven branches of impatience.."There's a fine George and Ira Gershwin song called 'Someone to Watch Over Me.' He also concluded arrangements to open an account for Gammoner in a Grand Cayman Island bank and one for Pinchbeck in Switzerland..Either operating on first-aid knowledge of his own or responding to an instruction from the medic, the cop slipped a foam pillow under Agnes's head.."When we pull away, people are waving across the street at the UPS truck, and the driver, he sees them, and he stands there, kind of confused, and then he waves back." Granted that he was only three going on four, nevertheless Barty had never met anyone with as much cheerful imagination as Angel. He intended to marry her in, oh, maybe twenty years..These weren't lakes of blood, just smears, so Junior could wipe them up quickly, once he got the corpse out of the hallway, but the sight of them further infuriated him. He was here to bring closure to all the unfinished business of Spruce Hills, to free himself from vengeful spirits, to better his life and plunge henceforth entirely into a bright new future. He wasn't here, damn it, to do building maintenance..A cold wind raised a haunting groan as it harried itself around and around in the bronze hollow of the bell atop the church steeple, shook dead needles from the evergreens, and resisted Paul's progress with what seemed to be malicious intent. Miles ago, between the towns of Brookings and Pistol River, he had decided that he wouldn't again walk this far north at this time of year, even if the guidebooks did claim that the Oregon coast was a comparatively temperate zone in winter..When he reported for a physical and a reassessment of his draft classification, on Wednesday, December 15, he left the insert in his hitching shoe; however, he limped like old Walter Brennan, the actor, hitching around the ranch in The Real McCoys..The paramedic pulled shut the door, leaving Joey outside in the night, in the storm, in the wind between worlds..Rhythmic breathing. Slow and deep. Slow and deep. Per Zedd, the route to tranquility is through the lungs.."Maybe it's not where the heart is," Wally corrected himself. "Maybe it's where the buffalo roam." "For one thing, jurors might conclude that the authorities never really suspected you and tried to frame you for murder to conceal their culpability in the poor maintenance of the tower. By far, most of the cops think you're innocent anyway." At the end of the famous sermon, Celestina's father had wished to all well-meaning people that into their lives should fall a rain of benign effects from the kind and selfless actions of countless Bartholomews whom they would never meet. And he assures those who are selfish or envious or lacking in compassion, or who in fact commit acts of great evil, that their deeds will return to them, magnified beyond imagining, for they are at war with the purpose of life. If the spirit of Bartholomew cannot enter their hearts and change them, then it will find them and mete out the terrible judgment they deserve..Only Angel spoke, with nary a catch or quiver, fully confident in her Barty. "Anything he can teach me, I can learn, and anything I can see, he can know. Anything, Aunt Aggie." Not once did he look back to see if the fire had grown visible as a glow against the night sky. The events at Victoria's were part of the past. He was finished with all that. Junior was a forward-thinking, future-oriented man..Vanadium owned so few clothes that the two bags had sufficient capacity to accommodate half the contents of the closet and dresser..Perhaps hoping to discover which runaway freight train or exploding factory would smear him across the landscape, Jacob pushed aside his dessert plate and shuffled each deck separately, then shuffled them together until they were well mixed. He stacked them in front of Maria.."I wouldn't just whack anyone, not even a worm bucket like Cain, any more than I would commit suicide. Remember, I believe in eternal consequences." In southern California, Agnes Lampion dreams of her newborn son. In Oregon, Junior Cain fearfully speaks a name in his sleep,

and Detective Vanadium, waiting to tell the suspect about his dead wife's diary, leans forward in his chair to listen, while ceaselessly- turning a quarter across the thick knuckles of his right hand..Champagne, then, and two shopping bags packed full of Armenian takeout. Sou beurek, mujadereh, chicken-and-rice biryani, stuffed grape leaves, artichokes with lamb and rice, orouk, manti, and more. Following a Baptist grace (said by Grace), Wally and the three White women, a fourth present in spirit, sat around the Formica-topped table, feasting, laughing, talking about art and healing and baby care and the past and tomorrow, while up on Nob Hill, Neddy Gnathic sat tuxedoed at a lacquered black piano, sprinkling diamond-bright notes through an elegant room..Junior had made a mistake when he smashed the pewter stick into Vanadium's face after the cop was already unconscious. He should have bound the bastard and attempted to revive him for interrogation..Caution discarded, Junior went inside, for the same reason that a dedicated opera aesthete might once a decade attend a country-music concert: to confirm the superiority of his taste and to be amused by what passed for music among the great unwashed. Some might call it slumming..A pink spot in the center of Victoria's forehead marked the point of impact. Soon it would be an ugly bruise. The skull bone did not appear to have been cratered.."From childhood, I've had this ... awareness, this perception of an infinitely more complex reality than what my five basic senses reveal. A psychic claims to predict the future. I'm not a psychic. Whatever I am ... I'm able to feel a lot of the other possibilities inherent in any situation, to know they exist simultaneously with my reality, side by side, each world as real as mine. In my bones, in my blood-".An overflow crowd of mourners had attended the services at St. Thomas's Church, standing shoulder to shoulder at the back of the nave, through the narthex, and across the sidewalk outside, and now everyone appeared to have come to the cemetery, as well.."One hour," he announced, establishing a countdown. In sixty minutes, his internal clock would rouse him from a meditative state..Junior hadn't paid attention to everyone who visited the pianist though surely he'd have noticed a certain stump in a cheap suit..Holding his precious face between her hands, she kissed him. She met his gaze, and furiously she blinked away her tears, for she wanted to be clear-sighted, to be looking into his eyes, to see him, the truest part of him in there beyond his eyes, until that very last moment when she could not have him anymore..she'd crossed herself during Edom's rant about the Tri-State Tornado of 1925. Then, she'd been warding off bad fortune; now, with a smile and a look of wonder, she was acknowledging the grace of God, which, according to the cards, had been settled generously on Bartholomew.."No. But I'm sure as can be, the kid is better off undiscovered by the likes of him."The sidewalks were crowded with businessmen in suits, hippies in flamboyant garb, groups of smartly attired suburban ladies in town to shop, and the usual forgettably dressed rabble, some smiling and some surly and some mumbling but as blank-eyed as mannequins, who might be hired assassins or poets, for all he knew, eccentric millionaires in mufti or carnival geeks who earned their living by biting heads off live chickens..The white padded eye patches rebuffed her, and she realized how profoundly the boy's double enucleation would affect how easily she could read his moods and know his mind. Here was a littler loss until now shadowed by the greater destruction. Denied the evidence of his eyes, she would need to be better at noting and interpreting nuances of his body language-also changed by blindness-and his voice, for there would be no soul revealed by hand-painted, plastic implants..Two teenage boys and one elderly woman scrambled across the sidewalk, grabbing at the ringing rain of quarters. They caught some, but others bounced and twirled through their grasping fingers, rolling-spinning away into the gutter..When Agnes and Paul returned from a honeymoon in Carmel, they discovered that Edom had finally cleared out Jacob's apartment. He donated his twin's extensive files and books to a university library that was building a collection to satisfy a growing professorial and student interest in apocalyptic studies and paranoid philosophy..Sitting on the edge of the bed, taking his hand, she stared at his sweet little bow of a mouth, whereas before she would have met his eyes. "Tell me." "I've got one of those faces so ordinary you see it everywhere," said Edom, and decided to tell the story of the Tri-State Tornado of 1925..This galerieur was tall, with silver hair, chiseled features, and the all-knowing, imperious manner of a gynecologist to royalty. He wore a well-tailored gray suit, and his gold Rolex was the very watch that Wroth Griskin might have killed for in his salad days..hands as she had seen surgeons do in movies, and she could almost believe that she was still at home, in bed, in the fevered throes of a terrible dream.."You don't get the heebie-jeebies," Max said. "You give 'em. Tell me what's wrong."Among Junior's many gifts, his ability to focus might have been the most important. Bob Chicane, his former instructor in matters meditative, had called him intense and even obsessive, following the painful incident involving meditation without seed, but intensity and obsession were false charges. Junior was simply focused.Paul set the nightstand down but waited, ready to shove the furniture into the stairwell if the swaddled gunman dared return..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.WHEN DR. JIM PARKHURST made his evening rounds, Junior didn't continue to feign sleep but asked earnest questions to which he knew most of the answers, having eavesdropped on the conversation between the physician and Detective Vanadium..Eventually, of course, dear Edom held forth about tornadoes--in particular the infamous Tri-State Tornado of 1925, which ravaged portions of Missouri, Illinois, and Indiana..With a prayer to the Holy Mother, Maria held one third of a knave of spades to the bright flame of the first candle. When it caught fire, she dropped the fragment into the votive glass, and as it was consumed, she said aloud, "For Peter," referring to the most prominent of the twelve apostles..where everyone spoke a single language and had all the blueberry pies they needed..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..Down the stairs, through the ground floor, quickly, soundlessly, breath held at times, listening for the other's breathing, listening for the softest squeak of rubber-soled shoes, although the hard clack of cloven hoofs and a whiff of sulfur would not have been surprising. At last he went to the kitchen, full circle from the shiny quarter on the breakfast table to the quarter again. No Cain..She wanted so badly to believe, to see her son made whole again, and the funny thing was that she could believe, and without emotional risk, because it was true..Junior continued east, weaving through the horde, convinced that he could hear the ghost cop's footsteps distinct from the tramping noise made by the legions of the living, penetrating the grumble and the bleat of traffic. Hollow, the dead man's tread echoed not only in Junior's ears but also through his body, in his bones..Enigmatic as ever on this subject, he continued: "I'm probably not blind more places than I am. Yeah, sure, I'd rather be me in one of the other places where my eyes are good, but this is the me I am. And you know what?". "Everybody needs cheese," Angel said, which apparently meant that Mrs. Orwall would never lack work. "Mommy, you're wrong..The guy was carrying a purse, whatever that meant, and when he walked through the door, he had a goofy look on his face, but his expression changed when he saw Junior..The wedding reception-big, noisy, and joyous-spread across the three properties without fences. His mother's name was so often mentioned, her presence so strongly felt in all the lives that she had touched, that sometimes it seemed that she was actually there with them..Escorting her home didn't require either a car or a long walk, because she lived upstairs in the hotel where he'd had dinner. The top three floors of the building featured enormous owner-occupied apartments..Every mother also believes that her baby is smarter than other babies. Sadly, time and the child's choices in life usually require her to adjust her opinion as she never will in the matter of physical beauty..Because he kept imagining the stealthy sounds of a dead cop rising in vengeance behind him, Junior switched on the radio. He tuned in a station featuring a Top 40 countdown..By the time all the details of mortuary and cemetery services were settled, Walter Panglo had a nervous tic in his left cheek. His eyes were open wide, as if he'd been so startled that his lids froze in a position of ascension, locked by a spasm of surprise. His hands must have grown clammy; he blotted them repeatedly on his suit..The moment he had seen the building in which Nolly maintained an office-an aged three-story brick structure in the North Beach district, a seedy strip club occupying the ground floor-Junior knew he'd found the breed of snoop he needed. The detective was at the top of six flights of narrow stairs-no elevator-at the end of a dreary hallway with worn linoleum and with walls mottled by stains of an origin best left unconsidered. The air smelled of cheap disinfectant, stale cigarette smoke, stale beer, and dead hopes..Spinning off the stool, he had also spun out of control. Second by second, twin storms of anger and fear whirled stronger within him..You have the teeth to do it, Junior thought, but he restrained himself from saying it. "This can't be a dead end..The maniac kicked once more, but because of the bracing dresser, the door wouldn't budge, so he kicked harder, again without success..Apparently Maria wished that she'd brought a rosary to dinner. With the fingers of her right hand, she pinched the knuckles of her left, one after the other, as if they were beads.

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