

## **HISTORY OF THE COMMUNE OF PARIS**

She leaned forward in her seat, and toward him, so he could see her more directly, and when she put one trembling hand against his cheek, his head dropped forward on neck muscles as limp as rags, his chin he had sat here with a pencil, making shopping lists. Now, instead of a pencil, there was the Italian-made .22 pistol. Eye to eye with Tom, Celestina herself did some clear-seeing. "You're special, too, in lots of obvious ways. But like Angel, you're special in some secret way ... aren't you?" "You'd never cheat me. I know you. We'd have Christmas twice a year and parties for half birthdays." "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." "Imagine me thinking you'd be gone," she said to Barty. "Your old mum is losing it. I never made a deal with Rumpelstiltskin, so there's nothing for him to collect." "Then you only have to wait eighteen years," he said, opening the apartment door and stepping aside once more, allowing Celestina to precede him. The decision had already been made that Grace would move in with Celestina and then following the wedding with Celestina and Wally. In Spruce Hills, she had dear friends whom she would miss, but there was nothing else in Oregon to draw her back, other than the narrow plot beside Harrison, where she expected eventually to be buried. The parsonage fire had destroyed all her personal effects and every family treasure from Celestina's grade-school spelling-bee medals to the last precious photograph. She wanted only to be close to her one remaining daughter and her granddaughter, to be part of the new life that they would build with Wally Lipscomb. 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. And speak the tongues of man and drake. Angel was adamant: "Nope. I could learn that. Like dressing myself and saying thank-you." "All right. Well ... Jesuits are encouraged to pursue education in any subject that interests them, not theology alone. I was deeply interested in physics." Otter hesitated and said, "Yes." "It isn't just the rotten railing," Junior said, still paging through the report, his outrage growing. "The stairs are unsafe." 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. During the cleaning, installation of new carpet, and painting that had followed the removal of the diarrhetic pig set loose by one of Cain's disgruntled girlfriends, the wife killer had spent a few nights in a hotel. Nolly took advantage of the opportunity to bring his associate James Hunnicolt--Jimmy Gadget--onto the premises to provide a customized, undetectable, exterior window-latch release. Bright though they were at all times, Barty's Tiffany eyes shone brighter now with beams of North Pole magic. "Maybe I do feel it." He would come. She knew. She had always known, but had half forgotten. There was something special about Angel, and because of that specialness, she lived under a threat as surely as the newborns of Bethlehem under King Herod's death decree. Long ago, Celestina glimpsed a complex and mysterious pattern in this, and to the eye of the artist, the symmetry of the design required that the father would sooner or later come. Frustrated again, she said simply, "Whenever Edom and Jacob talk about these things, I want you to be sure always to keep in mind that life's about living and being happy, not about dying." "See this?" He placed the pepper shaker in front of her on the room-service table and held the salt shaker concealed in his hand. Once more crowding his quarry, Junior said, "I'm amazed you'd recognize me, since I haven't been to the lounge often." After mentally reviewing what he must say, after working up a nervous edge, he dialed the SFPD emergency number. He looked up into the eyes of the stocky man with the birthmark. They were gray eyes, hard as nail heads, but clear and surprisingly beautiful in that otherwise unfortunate face. 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. A great boom. Concussion rocked the floor and shuddered the walls and made the roof timbers squeal as though unsuspected colonies of bats had taken flight by the thousands all in the same instant. Beyond the windows, the winter night sifted sootily down through the twinkling city, as he sat in his living room with a glass of Dry Sack in one hand and the picture of Celestina White in the other. 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. Shortly after six o'clock, Saturday morning, she stirred from a fretful dream and saw Barty sitting up in bed, reading. Ashamed and scared, she told no one. Although a victim, she blamed herself, and the prospect of being exposed to ridicule so horrified her that despair got the better of good judgment. She slept for a while, waking to a prayer spoken softly but fervently in Spanish. He had met her in a university adult-extension course titled "Increasing Self-Esteem Through Controlled Screaming." Participants were taught to identify harmful repressed emotions and dissipate them through the authentic vocal imitations of a variety of animals. Junior was educated. He wasn't merely a masseur with a fancy title; he had earned a hill bachelor of science degree with a major in rehabilitation therapy. When he watched television, which he never did to excess, he rarely settled for frivolous game shows or sitcoms like *Gomer Pyle* or *The Beverly Hillbillies*, or even *I Dream of Jeannie*, but committed himself to serious dramas that required intellectual involvement--*Guns, Smoke, Bonanza*, and *The Fugitive*. He preferred *Scrabble* to all other board games, because it expanded one's vocabulary. As a member in good standing of the Book-of-the-Month Club, he'd already acquired nearly thirty volumes of the finest in contemporary literature, and thus far he'd read or skim-read more than six of them. He would have read all of them if he had not been a busy man

with such varied interests; his cultural aspirations were greater than the time he was able to devote to them.. "Who...who're you?" Junior rasped, still badly rattled by the nightmare and by Vanadium's presence, but quick-witted enough to stay within the clueless character that he had been playing.. "You'll do better away from the ships, all the fighting and raiding. The King's working the old mines at Samory, round the mountain. There you'd be out of his way. Work for him you must, if you want to stay alive. I'll see that you're sent there. If you'll go." He hurt too much to recover quickly and take advantage of the woman's brief vulnerability. Clambering to his feet, he backed away from her and fumbled in a pocket for spare cartridges.. "If you don't, your feeling gland isn't working. Want me to read you to sleep?" If Junior was not discreet, and if gossip about the widower Cain and the sexy nurse began to circulate, Vanadium would be on the case again even if it had been closed. The cop was sick, hateful, driven by unknowable inner demons. Although he might for the moment have been reined in by those in higher office, mere gossip of a spicy nature would be excuse enough for him to open the file again, which he'd surely do without informing his superiors.. Surprised, Tom leaned in his chair to look more directly at the blind boy. On the telephone, Celestina had mentioned only that Barty was a prodigy, which didn't quite explain the aptness of the oak-tree metaphor.. With a thin hiss of disgust, Junior pulled away from the thing, whatever it was, withdrew the flashlight from his belt, and listened intently for sounds in the alleyway. No voices. No footsteps. Only distant traffic noises so muffled that they sounded like the grunts and groans and low menacing growls of foraging animals, displaced predators prowling the urban mist.. "Worlds," ventured Jacob, "in which that oil-tank truck never stopped on the railroad tracks in Bakersfield, back in '60. So the train never crashed into it and those seventeen people never died." Celestina said, "Phimie wasn't a mind reader. That's science fiction, Dr. Lipscomb." Police identified Junior as the prime suspect, and newspapers featured his photograph in most stories. They referred to him as "handsome," "dashing," "a man with movie-star good looks." He was said to be well known in San Francisco's avant-garde arts community. He got a thrill when he discovered that Sklent was quoted as calling him "a charismatic figure, a deep thinker, a man -with exquisite artistic taste .... so clever he could get away with murder as easily as anyone else might get away with double-parking. " "It's people like him," Sklent continued, "who confirm the view of the world that informs my painting." To her mother, Celestina said, "What did you mean when you said you'd heard all about Barty here?" A shock-haired, bright-eyed woman with a candle bound to her forehead set down her pick to show Otter a little cinnabar in a bucket, brownish red clots and crumbs. Shadows leapt across the earth face at which the miners worked. Old timbers creaked, dirt sifted down. Though the air ran cool through the darkness, the drifts and levels were so low and narrow the miners had to stoop and squeeze their way. In places the ceilings had collapsed. Ladders were shaky. The mine was a terrifying place; yet Otter felt a sense of shelter in it. He was half sorry to go back up into the burning day.. Against the sight of Franklin Chan's pity, which implied the hopelessness of Barty's condition, Agnes closed her eyes. But she opened them at once, because this chosen darkness reminded her that unwanted darkness might be Barty's fate.. "Fourteen. It's usually the family that's behind an expression of the calling at such a young age, but in my case, I had to argue my folks into it." Everyone from the pie caravan had gathered under the oak. The entire family, in its many names, adults and children, heads tipped back hands shielding their eyes from the late sun, watched Barty's progress in all but complete silence.. He needed to keep moving, conduct the search, find the watch, and get the hell out of here, but he couldn't stop staring at the musician. Something about the cadaver made him nervous-aside from the fact that it was dead and disgusting and, if he was caught with it, a one-way ticket to the gas chamber.. Rapt, frightened yet wonderstruck, Agnes leaned forward, squinting between the whisking wipers.. Tom Vanadium merely arched one eyebrow, as if to say that more than a single answer ought to be obvious.. Jacob made more fire sounds as he stripped the clear cellophane off a second new deck of playing cards, then off a third and a fourth.. Edom and Jacob came to dinner with Agnes every evening. And though the past weighed heavily on them when they were under this roof, without fail they stayed long enough to wash the dishes before fleeing back to their apartments over the garage.. Of course, he had the Pinchbeck and Gammoner identities waiting, two escape hatches. But he didn't want to use them. He liked his life on Russian Hill, and he was loath to leave it.. Two soft-boiled eggs, one slice of bread neither toasted nor buttered, a glass of apple juice, and a dish of orange. With a shiver, Kathleen said, "We'd like to know more about why we did the things we did for you. Why the quarters? Why the song?" Shortly past nine o'clock, an hour after Edom and Jacob had gone, Barty came downstairs, book in hand. "The twisties are back." Agnes had the craziest notion that he was counting them, when at his age, Of course, he would have no concept of numbers.. As he was wheeled headfirst into the operating room, Barty raised off the gurney pillow. He fixed his gaze on his mother until the door swung shut between them.. 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.. By the time the family was ushered out, protesting, at the end of evening visiting hours, Junior hadn't succumbed to their pressure. If his conversion was to appear convincingly reluctant, he would have to resist them for at least another few days.. Although this was perhaps the happiest evening of Celestina's life, it wasn't without a note of melancholy. She couldn't avoid thinking about Phimie.. the social worker and her family. Husband, wife, daughter, son. The little girl smiled shyly through braces. The boy was impish.. "Me, me," Celestina said. "In fact, fianc?es should come first." Rising, Celestina said to Tom, "Last Tuesday night, we had to switch on the lawn sprinklers. This will be much better." From these ominous spatters, several fibers bristled, having stuck to the pewter when the drizzle was still wet. They appeared to be human hairs.. The blocking dresser, which doubled as a vanity, was surmounted by a mirror. One bullet drilled through the plywood backing, made a spider-web puzzle of the silvered glass, lodged in the wall above the bed-thwack-and kicked out a spray of plaster chips.. Celestina circled him, half carrying but also half dragging the chair, either because her nerves were still ringing and her arms were weak--or because she was

faking weakness in the hope of luring him to a reckless response. Junior circled her while she rounded on him frantically trying to deal with the pistol without taking his eyes off his adversary.. "Crafty men need to stick together," he said. "Men who have no art at all, nothing but wealth—they pit us one against the other, for their gain not ours. We sell em our power. Why do we? If we went our own way together, we'd do better, maybe." By Friday morning, September 10, little more than forty-eight hours after the shooting, he felt good and was in fine spirits.. Tuesday morning, while he showered with a swimming cockroach that was as exuberant as a golden retriever in the motel's lukewarm water, Junior vowed never to kill again. Except in self-defense.. The ninth piece was not art, certainly not a work by Griskin, and could disturb no one half as much as it rattled Junior. Upon a black pedestal stood a pewter candlestick identical to the one that had cracked the skull of Thomas Vanadium and had added dimension to the cop's previously pan-flat face.. "I got to admit," Nolly said, "I'm surprised these little pranks have rattled him so deeply." "Why are you here?" "Where else I should be and for why? I watch you over." As the tears cleared from Agnes's eyes, she saw that Maria was sewing. A shopping bag stood to one side of the chair, and to the other side, open on the floor, a case contained spools of thread, needles, a pincushion, a pair of scissors, and other supplies of a seamstress's trade.. "He's a hollow man," Vanadium said. "He believes in nothing. Hollow men are vulnerable to anyone who offers them something that might fill the void and make them feel less empty. So—" The possibility that he'd left a clear fingerprint on the watch crystal had to be judged remote. And the band had been too textured to take a print useful to the police.. Celestina breezed through the open door with Angel. "No vanilla wafers. You'll be up all night with a sugar rush." Now, the hateful music unnerved him. He became convinced that if he went home alone, the phantom chanteuse—whether Victoria Bressler's vengeful ghost or something else—would croon to him once more. He wanted company and distraction, after all.. Junior tipped his head back and gazed up toward the section of broken-out railing along the high observation deck.. Kathleen expected this would prove to be true. She herself was not frightened by Thomas Vanadium's appearance; but then she had been prepared for it before she first saw him. And she wasn't a murderer, fearful of retribution, to whom this particular face would seem like Judgment personified.. Phimie's speech had been slurred later, as well, immediately following the birth of the baby, when she had struggled to convey her desire to name her daughter Angel.. 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.. Celestina had wanted to go to Oregon for the service, but Tom, Max Bellini, the Spruce Hills police, and Wally Lipscomb—to whom, by Sunday, she'd begun talking almost hourly on the telephone—all advised strenuously against making the trip. A man as crazed and as reckless as Enoch Cain, expecting to find her at the funeral home or the cemetery, might not be deterred by a police guard, no matter what its size.. He was no longer in his scrubs, but wore gray wool slacks and a blue cashmere sweater over a white shirt. Face somber, he looked less like an obstetrician engaged in the business of life than like a professor of philosophy forever pondering the inevitability of death.. 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." Footsteps in the hall drew their attention to the open door, where the surgeon appeared in his loose cotton greens.. "May 14, 1845, in Canton, China, a theater fire killed sixteen hundred seventy. On December 8, 1863, a fire in the Church of La Compana, in Santiago, Chile, left two thousand five hundred and one dead. One hundred fifty perished in a fire at a Paris charity bazaar: May 4, 1897. June 30, 1900, a dock fire in Hoboken, New Jersey, killed three hundred twenty-six. . .". Tommy James and the Shondells, good American boys, had a record farther down the charts—"Hanky Panky"—that Junior felt was better than the Beatles' tune. The failure of his countrymen to support homegrown talent aggravated him. The nation seemed eager to surrender its culture to foreigners.. Mary had a yellow vinyl ball of the type Koko would happily chase all day and, if allowed, chew all night, keeping the house awake with its squeaking. "Want this?" she asked Koko. Koko wanted it, of course, needed it, absolutely had to have it, and leaped into action as Mary pretended to throw the ball.. Too late for interrogation now, with Vanadium bludgeoned into eternal sleep and resting under many fathoms of cold bedding.. Grace, proving again the aptness of her name, said the one thing most likely, in time, to bring true peace to Celestina. "Remember Bartholomew." Celestina almost begged off, almost told him that she had no interest in whatever curiosity of medicine or physiology he might have witnessed. The only miracle that would have mattered, Phimie's survival, had not been granted.. This night in Weott, with the high solemn silence of the redwood forests out there now and waiting to embrace him in the morning, he slept without dreams.. yunh," so she nodded as vigorously as she was able to do, and tightened her grip on Celestina's hand.. "I don't just think so. And I don't just know it. I feel it, exactly like you feel all the ways things are. I'll bet you feel it, too." IN GOOD DARK SUITS, clean-shaven, as polished as their shoes, carrying valises, the three arrived in Junior's hospital room even before the usual start of the working day, wise men without camels, not bearing gifts, but willing to pay a price for grief and loss. Two lawyers and a high-level political appointee, they represented the state, the county, and the insurance company in the matter of the improperly maintained railing on the observation platform at the fire tower.. I also wanted information on various things that had happened back then, before Ged and Tenar were born. A good deal about Earthsea, about wizards, about Roke Island, about dragons, had begun to puzzle me. In order to understand current events, I needed to do some historical research, to spend some time in the Archives of the Archipelago.. calm. He tried to imagine what Victoria's breasts would look like, freed from all restraint.. So these are reports of my explorations and discoveries: tales from Earthsea for those who have liked or think they might like the place, and who are willing to accept these hypotheses: things change: authors and wizards are not always to be trusted: nobody can explain a dragon.. Fear of the unknown is a

weakness, for it presumes dimensions to life beyond human control. Zedd teaches that nothing is beyond our control, that nature is just a mindlessly grinding machine with no more mysteries in it than we will find in applesauce..Reverend White's polished, somewhat theatrical, yet sincere voice rose out of the past to issue this threat in Junior's memory as he had issued it that night, from a tape recorder, while Junior had been dancing a sweaty horizontal boogie with Seraphim in her parsonage bedroom..The round table seated six, but they required only three chairs, because the two brainless friends were a pair of Angel's dolls..Before they set out for the amusement park, Agnes pulled him aside, held him close, and said, "Listen, kid of mine, I'm not giving up. Don't think I ever would. Let's have fun today. This evening, you and I and Angel will convene a meeting of the North Pole Society of Not Evil Adventurers"-the girl had become the third member years ago" and all truths will be told and secrets known. ".The next thing he knew, he was at the kitchen sink, turning off the water, which he couldn't remember having turned on. He appeared to have washed the bloody candlestick-it was clean-but he had no recollection of this bit of housekeeping..Antihypertensive drugs were administered intravenously, and Phimie was confined to bed, attached to a heart monitor.. "A friend's daughter. They say she died in a traffic accident down in San Francisco. She was even younger than Naomi."..Since her conversation with Joshua Nunn the previous Thursday, she'd had more than four days to armor herself for the worst. She prepared for it as well as any mother could while still holding on to her sanity..Although he had made no effort to summon them, tears spilled from Junior's closed eyes. They weren't drawn from him by thoughts of poor Naomi. These next few days-perhaps weeks-were going to be tedious, until he could have Nurse Victoria Bressler. Under the circumstances, he had good reason to feel sorry for himself..In his mind, he carried a blueprint of the house more precisely drawn than anything that might have been prepared by an architect. He knew the place to the inch, and he adjusted his pace and all his mental calculations every month to compensate for his steady growth. So many paces from here to there. Every turn and every peculiarity of the floor plan committed indelibly to memory. A journey like this was a complicated mathematical problem, but being a math prodigy, he moved through his home almost as easily as when he had enjoyed sight..At the end of his fourth month, instead of in his seventh, he said "Mama," and clearly knew what it meant. He repeated it when he wanted to get her attention..With Angel at breakfast, instead of just Uncle Jacob, at least Barty had someone to talk to, even if she did insist on speaking more often through her dolls than directly. Apparently, the dolls were on the table, propped up with bowls. The first, Miss Pixie Lee, had a high-pitched, squeaky voice. The second, Miss Velveeta Cheese, spoke in a three year-old's idea of what a throaty-voiced, sophisticated woman sounded like, although to Barty's ear, this was more suitable to a stuffed bear.. "Salt water would be too cumbersome anyway. He'd have to drink a lot of it shortly before he heaved, but he was surrounded by cops with good reason to keep an eye on him. Does ipecac come in capsule form?"..One problem: Nolly Wulfstan, Quasimodo without a hump, probably repaired to this convenient club after work, to down a few beers, because this was surely as close as he would ever get to a halfway attractive woman. The detective would think that he and Junior were here for the same reason-to gawk at nearly naked babes and store up enough images of bobbling breasts to get through the night-and he would not be able to comprehend that for Junior the attraction was the dance, the intellectual thrill of experiencing a new cultural phenomenon..If the sight of his daughter almost drove him to his knees, the sight of his wife, also his first in seven years, lifted him until he was virtually floating across the grass..In his car, currently a Mercedes, he made three trips between his apartment and the garage in which he'd stored the Ford van under the Pinchbeck name. He took precautions against being followed..The vending machines were designed to accept quarters, not to eject them. They didn't make change. Mechanically, this barrage wasn't possible.. "All right, the scary one." "I SOMETIMES EVEN EAT SPIDERS WITH MY CAVIAR." "Now who's being gross?" The morning that it happened, Edom woke early from a nightmare about the roses..Junior suspected that no one other than this man's mother called him Tom. He was probably "Detective" to some and "Vanadium" to most who knew him..Slowly rotating his raised hands before his eyes, as if he saw them young and supple-fingered, the magician described the amazing manipulations that a master card mechanic could perform. Though he spoke without flash or filigree, he made these feats of skill sound more sorcerous than hares from hats, doves from scarves, and blondes bisected by buzz saws.. "Thank you, Nurse Bressler," he said most solemnly, matching her tone, barely able to control the urge to glance at her, smile, and give her another preview of his quick, pink tongue.. "By the close of business tomorrow," said the lawyer, "I expect to have an offer for your consideration."..Besides, the possibilities repulsed him. The very thought of a splendid-looking woman like Victoria submitting to a grotesque like Vanadium would have withered his soul if he had possessed a soul.. "It's all right," Tom assured her. To Angel, he said, "No, I'm not sad. And you know why?"..She stood just inside the front door of the apartment, admiring herself in a full-length mirror, waiting patiently for Celestina, who was packing dolls, coloring books, tablets, and a large collection of crayons into a zippered satchel..He had been surprised to learn her age. She didn't appear to be that old. Thirty or not, Victoria was unusually attractive..before used. Boeotian. A dull, obtuse, stupid person. He felt very Boeotian all of a sudden..Celestina met them at the front door and flung her arms around Wally. He let go of his cane-Tom caught it-and returned her embrace with such ardor, kissed her so hard, that evidently residual weakness was no longer a problem..Halos and rainbows loomed in her memory, ominous as they had never been before..All he cared about was Red Planet, and what might happen after page 103. He had carried the book with him to the doctor's office, and on the way home in the car; he repeatedly opened it, squinting at the lines of type, trying to read around or through the "twisty" spots. "Jim and Frank and Willis, they're in deep trouble."..As home tours went, this one was notably less interesting than most. The accountant appeared to have no secret life, no perverse interests that he hid from the world..He rode up to the third of five floors in the service elevator, which other tenants were permitted to use only when moving in or moving out, or when taking delivery of large items of furniture.

Another elevator, at the front of the building, was too public to suit his purposes..Later, at home, after Agnes sent Edom back to his apartment, she opened a bottle of vodka that she had bought on the way back from Maria's. She mixed it with orange juice in a waterglass..When the ophthalmologist saw her misery, his kind face softened further, and his pity became palpable..Naked, dripping, he roamed the apartment. As on the night of December 13, the voice seemed to arise from thin air: ahead of him, then behind him, to the right, but now to the left.. "I'm going to tell you something about your father that might comfort you," he said, "but you can't ask me for more than I'm ready to say right now. It's all a part of what I'll discuss with you in Bright Beach." The runt was so out of proportion to his office furniture that he appeared to be a bug perched in the giant leather executive chair, which itself looked like the maw of a Venus's--flytrap about to swallow him for lunch. He allowed such a lengthy silence to follow Junior's question that by the time he answered, his reply was superfluous..Considering his battered and stitched face, considering also his tragic and colorful history, Vanadium spoke with remarkably little drama. His voice was calm, nearly flat, rising and falling so little that he almost talked in a monotone..Junior was paying his dinner check and calculating the tip when the pianist launched into "Someone to Watch over Me." Although he'd expected it all evening, he twitched when he recognized the tune..This was his door, however, not hers. She did not possess a ticket to ride the train that had come for him. He boarded, and the train was gone, and with it the light in his eyes. She lowered her mouth to his, kissing him one last time, and taste of his blood was not bitter, but sacred..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..Initially, when told that his patient was a Negro, Junior had been reluctant to serve as her physical therapist. Her program of rehab required mostly structured exercise to restore flexibility and to gain strength in the affected limb, but some massage would be involved, as well, which made him uncomfortable..Requital. Restitutional apology, which must have been learned in a law school where English was the second language. Even atonement.

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