

## ARCHE NOAH 20

Turning away from the window, Tom met her gaze. His smoke-gray eyes looked frosted, as though the fog ghosts had passed through the window and possessed him. But then the flame on the table candle flared in a draft; lambent light melted the chill from his eyes, and she saw again the warmth and the beautiful sorrow that had impressed her before..Junior in the fog. Trying oh-so-hard to live in the future, where the winners live. But being relentlessly sucked back into the useless past by memory..The hall was deserted. Then a woman came out of one of the offices and walked toward the gallery, without glancing at him.. "Yes. The dried root of a Brazilian plant, the ipecacuanha. It induces vomiting with great effectiveness. The active ingredient is a powdered white alkaloid called emetine."..Although, to her eyes, the natural world had an ominous cast this morning, she was also aware of its great beauty. She wanted Barty to store up every magnificent vista, every exquisite detail..Years earlier, a stream had been diverted to fill the vast excavation. Stock fish were added, mostly trout and bass..The dining room again, but this time he remembered how he had gotten here: by way of the living room.. "Only for a little while. Then he is joining me at the gallery, and after the show's over, we're having dinner together.".. "You'd never cheat me. I know you. We'd have Christmas twice a year and parties for half birthdays."..Agnes, Celestina, and Grace were soon working together with a harmony that was kitchen poetry. Paul had noticed that most women seemed to like or dislike one another within a minute of their first encounter, and when they found one another companionable, they were as open and easy on their first meeting as though they were friends of long duration. Within half an hour, these three sounded as if they were of one age, inseparable since childhood. He had not seen Grace or Celestina free of despair since the reverend's murder, but here they were able for the first time to veil their anguish in the bustle of baking and the pleasure of making a new friend..They were as gracious as any people he had ever met, but they also seemed genuinely interested in his story. He wasn't surprised that..Although she had never seen snow other than in pictures and on film, this deep-settled silence seemed to speak of failing flakes, of white muffling mantles, and she wouldn't have been in the least surprised if, stepping outside, she had found herself in a glorious winter landscape, cold and crystalline, here on the always-snowless hills and shores of the California Pacific..The musician's bird-sharp gaze grew dull. His pink tongue protruded from his mouth, like a half-eaten worm.. "I wish my Rico could have met your Harrison, too," Maria told Grace, referring to the husband who had abandoned her. "Maybe the reverend could've done with words what I couldn't do with my foot in Rico's trasero."..He woke at noon, eyes gummed shut with the effluence of sleep. He felt lousy, but he was in control of himself-and strong enough to fetch his suitcase, which he'd been unable to carry upon arrival..Agnes thought crazily of their early dates and the first years of their marriage. They had occasionally gone to the drive-in, sitting close..The old man assumed the solemn and knowing expression of one guarding mysteries, a sphinx without headdress and mane. "If I told you, dear lady, it wouldn't be magic anymore. Merely a trick."..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..Edom and Jacob Isaacson were her older brothers, who lived in two small apartments above the four-car garage at the back of the property..Seeing her, Joey leaped up front his armchair again. He managed to hold on to his book this time, but he stumbled into the footstool and nearly lost his balance..Otter stated it as an unfortunate fact, not as a moral assertion. Hound looked at him with appreciation. Living with the pirate king, he was sick of boasts and threats, of boasters and threateners.. "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."..The sirens shrieked so loud that he felt a sympathetic vibration in his dental fillings, and with a sharp cry of brakes, a great red truck turned the corner, at once followed by a second..When his search of the desk drawers was only half completed, the telephone rang-not the usual strident bell, but a modulated electronic brrrrr. He had no intention of answering it..or the barber. Never was he afraid to fall asleep, and having fallen asleep, he appeared to have only pleasant dreams..Not a word of that would come to Paul, but his frustrating speechlessness might have been for the best. From everything he knew about this hero, such effusive praise would embarrass him..Matching his mother's whisper, taking obvious delight in their conspiracy, he said, "Our own secret society."..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..In the execution, he was likewise scrupulous, for he didn't want the grownups to see what Angel saw; he preferred they believe it was sleight of hand-or magic. After the usual moves, he briefly closed his right hand around the coin, then with a snap of his wrist, flung it at Angel, simultaneously distracting with flourishes aplenty..Other rooms were furnished as sparsely as those in a monastery. Indeed, the dining room contained nothing whatsoever..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..By mid-March, he

had exhausted the possibilities of Bartholomew as a surname. By the time that he shot himself in September, he had combed through the first quarter million listings in the directory in search of those whose first names were Bartholomew..As Barty ascended higher, Agnes's fear became purer, but at the same time, she was filled with a wonderful, irrational exhilaration. That this could be accomplished, that the darkness could be overcome, struck music from the harpstrings of the soul. From time to time, the boy paused, perhaps to rest or to mull over the three-dimensional map in his incredible mind, and every time that he started upward again, he put his hands in exactly the right place, whereupon Agnes would speak a silent inner yes! Her heart was with Barty high in the tree, her heart in his, as he had been with her, safe inside her womb, on the rainy twilight that she had ridden the spinning, tumbling car to widowhood..He fiddled with the cylinder until it swung open. Five chambers, a gleaming cartridge in each..This was the same woman who had been stripping the second bed when Celestina arrived earlier. Now she was here to remake the first..Under other circumstances, Agnes might have blushed, but now her apparently irrational fear of too much life insurance had been vindicated..A cheer went up from family and friends, and Agnes could only imagine what it must feel like to be Barty, both blind and blessed, his heart as rich in courage as in kindness.."One of the things I was searching for in your house was a life insurance policy on your wife. I didn't find one. Didn't find any canceled checks for the premium, either."The restaurant wasn't fancy. A coffee shop. Aromatic bacon sizzling, eggs frying. The warm cinnamony smell of fresh pastries, the bracing scent of strong coffee. Clean, bright surroundings.."Could you throw an Oreo someplace you weren't blind or maybe someplace Wally wasn't shot?".Waking from a starry night in the Old West into electric light, gazing up into a blur of faces sans cowboy hats, Agnes felt someone moving a piece of ice in slow circles over her bare abdomen. Shivering as the cold water trickled down her sides, she tried to ask them why they were applying ice when she was already chilled to the bone, but she couldn't find her voice..Ichabod passed Bartholomew through the open door to Celestina in the passenger's seat, went around the Buick, put the tote bag in the back, and climbed behind the wheel once more..Eleven days had passed since Wally stopped three bullets. He still had a little residual weakness in his arms, grew tired more easily than before he'd wound up on the wrong end of a pistol, complained of stiffness in his muscles, and used a cane to keep his full weight off his wounded leg. The rest of the medical care he required, as well as physical rehabilitation, could be had in Bright Beach as well as in San Francisco. By March, he should be back to normal, assuming that the definition of normal included massive scars and an internal hollow space where once his spleen had been..Junior had hoped not to be recognized by anyone at this affair. He regretted that he hadn't stuck to his original plan, maintaining surveillance of the gallery from his parked car..Six captain's chairs encircled the big round table, one for everybody, including Agnes, but only Paul and Barty stayed seated..He pushed on the door, but still it resisted, and he surprised himself by letting out a bellow of frustration that expressed quite the opposite of self-control, though no one listening could have the slightest doubt about his determination to commit and command..Junior blinked and dared not speak, because he didn't know any Bartholomew, and now he was certain the cop was weaving an elaborate web of deceit, setting a trap. Why would he have spoken a name that meant nothing to him?.The Selective Service physician quickly declared Junior to be maimed and unfit. Quietly but with passion, Junior pleaded for a chance to prove his value to the armed forces, but the examiner was unmoved by patriotism, interested only in keeping the cattle line of other potential draftees moving past him at a steady pace..When the subject shifted to card tricks and fortune-telling, Maria admitted to practicing divination with standard playing cards..Junior gave the Raisinets to him, and Google left the theater with his candy and his cash..During those spells when she was too shaky to draw, she stood at the window, gazing at the storied city..The busboy swept the empty appetizer plates away as the waiter arrived simultaneously with small salads. Fresh martinis followed..She devoted half her work time to the neighbors-in-need route that Agnes had established and steadily expanded, the other half to her painting. She was in no rush to mount a new show; anyway, she didn't dare renew contact with the Greenbaum Gallery or with anyone at all from her past life, until the police found Enoch Cain..Four blocks from his office, on a street more upscale than his own, Nolly came to the Tollman Building. Built in the 1930s, it had an Art Deco flair. The public areas featured travertine floors, and a WPA-ers mural extolling the machine age brightened a lobby wall..Currently, the rental market was extremely tight. The first day of his search resulted only in the discovery that he was going to have to pay more than he expected even for modest quarters.."You'll be out of ICU tomorrow, I bet. You'll have a phone, I'll call. And I'll come soon as I can."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..He could recall clearly when he had known that he would marry her: during his first year of college, when he'd returned home for the Christmas break. Away at school, he had missed her every day, and the moment that he saw her again, an abiding tension left him, and he felt at peace for the first time in months..For half an hour he studied Barty's eyes with various devices and instruments. Thereafter, he arranged an immediate appointment with an oncologist, as Joshua Nunn had predicted..And so at the age of thirty-one, after more than twenty-eight years of blindness with a few short reprieves, Barty Lampion received the gift of sight from his ten-year-old daughter. 1996 through 2000: Day after day, the work was done in memory of Agnes Lampion, Joey Lampion, Harrison White, Seraphim White, Jacob Isaacson, Simon Magusson, Tom Vanadium, Grace White, and most recently Wally Lipscomb, in memory of all those who had given so much and, though perhaps still alive in other places, were gone from here..The sound-suppressor didn't render the pistol entirely silent, but the three soft reports, each like a quiet cough muffled by a hand, wouldn't have carried beyond the hallway..He doused the light and crouched motionless in the absolute darkness, leaning against a wall of the dumpster to steady himself, because his feet were planted in slippery layers of fog-dampened plastic trash bags..Devil

mountains, sacred islands, sacramental rivers and cities, Jesuits: These spiritual references at every turn made Junior uneasy. This was a haunted night, no doubt about that. He wouldn't have been greatly surprised if he had glanced at his rearview mirror and seen Thomas Vanadium's blue Studebaker Lark Regal closely tailing him, not the real car raised from Quarry Lake, but a ghostly version, with the filthy-scabby-monkey spirit of the cop at the wheel, an ectoplasmic Naomi at his side, Victoria Bressler and Ichabod and Bartholomew Prosser and Neddy Gnathic in the backseat: the Studebaker packed full of spirits like a bozo-stuffed clown car in a circus, though there would be nothing funny about these revenge-minded spooks when the doors flew open and they came tumbling out. Averting his eyes from Vanadium's face, Junior moved farther up the stocky body. He folded back the tweed sports jacket to reveal a shoulder holster. In the instant that Junior had shoved Naomi into the rotted railing, he had foreseen this visit from Rudy, Sheena, and Kaitlin. He'd known he could pretend to be offended at the state's offer to put a price on his loss, could feign revulsion, could resist convincingly--until gradually, after grueling days or weeks, he reluctantly allowed the indefatigable. "As I explained, he might have thought I was you," Edom said, staring at the neatly ordered volumes on the nearby bookshelves. The receptionist, Rebecca, had stayed late, just to keep company with Barty in the waiting room. As she settled into a chair beside the boy, he asked her if she knew what gravity was on Mars, and when she confessed ignorance, he said, "Only thirty-seven percent what it is here. You can really jump on Mars." Sitting in the client's chair, across the cigarette-scarred desk from Nolly, Junior heard or imagined that he heard the scurry of tiny rodent feet behind him, and something chewing on paper inside a pair of rust spotted filing cabinets. Repeatedly, he wiped at the back of his neck or reached down to rub a hand over his ankles, convinced that insects were crawling on him. On the serving tables, the canap? trays held only stained paper doilies, crumbs, and empty plastic champagne glasses. "Done," Agnes said. "Now put away the three dollars, and let's have our lesson before my water breaks." "As she comes closer to full term," said Dairies, "she's at great risk of preeclampsia developing into full eclampsia." As kids living in a house that was run like a prison, stifled by the oppressive rule of a morose father who believed that any form of entertainment was an offense against God--they conducted secret card games as their primary act of rebellion. A deck of cards was small enough to hide quickly and to keep hidden successfully even during one of their father's painstakingly thorough room searches. Perhaps this particular worry was not ordinary maternal concern. If a sixth sense is at work in all of us, then perhaps subconsciously Apes was aware of the tragedy to come: the tumors, the surgery, the blindness. Earthquake weather. Southern Californians had many definitions of that term, but Edom knew he was right this time. Thunder would roll again soon, but it would arise from underfoot. In November, Edom asked Maria Gonzalez to dinner and a movie. Although he was only six years older than Maria, both agreed that this was a date between friends, not really a boy-girl thing. Meanwhile, as attorneys met on Tuesday afternoon, Junior, having taken leave from work, phoned a locksmith to change the locks at his house. As a cop, Vanadium might have access to a lock-release gun that Maria's face gathered into a frown, like a piece of brown cloth cinched by a series of whipstitches. "Six lessons." Celestina told them about Nella Lombardi and about the message Phimie delivered to Dr. Lipscomb after being resuscitated. "Phimie was, . . . so special. There's something special about her baby, too." In July 1967, at two and a half, he finally contracted his first cold, an off-season virus with a mean bite. His throat was sore, but he didn't fuss or even complain. He swallowed his medicine without resistance, and though he rested occasionally, he played with toys and paged through picture books with as much pleasure as ever. Twilight, nearly gone and purple in the west, inspired a bright violet line along the crest of an incoming bank of bay fog, as though the mist were shot through with a luminous vein of neon, transforming the entire sparkling city into a stylish cabaret just now opening for business. The night, soft as a woman come to dance, carried a steely blade of cold in its black-silk skirts. When she was finished with the dishtowel, she returned to the dining room, and though dinner was underway, she called for another toast. Raising her glass, she said, "To Maria, who is more than my friend. My sister. I can't let you talk about what I've given you without telling your girls that you've given back more. You taught me that the world is as simple as sewing, that what seem to be the most terrible problems can be stitched up, repaired." She raised her glass slightly higher. "First chicken to be come with first egg inside already. God bless." With the same surprising ease that she had gotten a plane out of San Francisco on a one-hour notice, Celestina booked two return seats on an early-evening flight from Oregon, as though she had a supernatural travel agent. In recounting the fortune-telling session, Agnes had not told the magician about the four jacks of spades, only about the aces of diamonds and hearts. She never wore her worries for anyone to see; and though she had made a joke of the appearance of the fourth knave on Friday, Edom knew that it had deeply troubled her. An unfortunately bumpy ride for the deceased: along the hallway, through the foyer, across the entry threshold, down the porch steps, across a lawn dappled with pine shadows and yellow moonlight, to the graveled driveway. No complaints. Maria arrived early, expecting to assist with final details in the kitchen. Though honored to be a guest, she wasn't able to stand by with a glass of wine while preparations remained to be made. 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. "Cancer," she whispered, and superstitiously reproached herself for speaking the word aloud, as though thereby she'd given power to the malignancy and ensured its existence. As Agnes slipped excess pillows out from behind him and eased him down into the covers, Barty half woke, muttering about how the police were going to kill poor LummoX, who hadn't meant to do all that damage, but he'd been frightened by the gunfire, and when you weighed six tons and had eight legs, you sometimes couldn't get around in tight places without knocking something over. "AND I DRINK CHAMPAGNE ALL DAY," said Miss Cheese, pronouncing it "cham-pay-non." By the time he put his suitcase and three boxes of books--the collected works of Zedd and selections from the Book-of-the-Month Club--in the Suburban, Junior had rushed twice more to the bathroom. His legs were shaky, and he felt

hollow, frail, as if he'd lost more than was apparent, as if the essential substance of himself was gone..Traditional logic argued that an infant, no more than two weeks old, could not be a serious threat to a grown man..As though one of the quarters had dropped into his ear and triggered a golden oldie in the jukebox of his mind, Junior heard Vanadium's voice in the hospital room, in Spruce Hills, on the night of the day when Naomi died: "en you cut Naomi's string, you put an end to the effects that her music would have on the lives of others and on the shape of the future.....The need for relief was tremendous, inexpressible, and the urge to urinate was irresistible, and yet he could not let go. For more than eighteen hours, his natural urinary process had been overridden by concentrative meditation. Now the golden vault was locked tight. Every time that he strained for release, a new and more hideous cramp savaged him. He felt as if Lake Mead filled his distended bladder, while Boulder Dam had been erected in his urethra.."Besides, I still live by my vows as much as possible, though I've had the longest continuing dispensation on record." A smile on that cracked countenance could be touching, but an ironic look now worked less well; it gave Kathleen a chill. "Vanity is a sin I've more easily been able to avoid than some others." Junior actually raised his trembling left hand to his ear, expecting to find the quarter tucked in the auditory canal, held between the tragus and the antitragus, waiting to be plucked with a flourish..With a sigh, Obadiah differed: "Not clever. Crude. Before my hands became these great-knuckled lumps, I could have dazzled you." Thrilled to have inspired this awe in her, he closed the book. "Remember what we talked about a long time ago? You asked me how come, if I could walk where the rain wasn't. . ." "Retinoblastoma is usually unilateral," Dr. Chan continued, "occurring in one eye. Bartholomew has tumors in both." The second and third rooms proved to be deserted, as well, and as muffled as the cushioned spaces of a funeral home, but an office was tucked discreetly at the back of the final chamber. As Junior crossed the third room, apparently monitored by closed-circuit security cameras, a man glided out of the office to greet him..From Christmas through February, he dated a beautiful stock analyst and broker-Tammy Bean-who specialized in finding value in companies that had rewarding relationships with brutal dictators..He half expected to hear Thomas Vanadium in the distance, softly singing "Someone to Watch over Me." Junior needed something in his life, a missing element without which he could never be complete, something more than a heart mate, more than German or French, or karate, and for as long as he could remember, he'd been searching for this mysterious substance, this enigmatic object, this skill, this thingumajigger, this dowhacky, this flumadiddle, this force or person, this insight, but the problem was that he didn't know what he was searching for, and so often when he seemed to have found it, he hadn't found it after all, therefore he worried that if ever he did find it, then he might throw it away, because he would not realize that it was, in fact, the very jigger or gigamaree that he'd been in search of since childhood..Yet his heart slammed hard and heavy against his confining ribs, and fear stippled the nape of his neck..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..His words echoed back to her from July: My cold's just here, not every place I am..The driver's door opened, shoving aside a damaged tea table, and a man climbed out of the Pontiac..Lipscomb shifted his gaze from the street below to the source of the rain. "Phimie was not gone long, perhaps a minute-a minute and ten seconds at most-and when she was with us again, it was clear from her condition that the cardiac arrest was most likely secondary to a massive cerebral incident. She was disoriented, paralysis on the right side ... with the distortion of the facial muscles that you saw. Her speech was slurred at first, but then something strange happened. . .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..This thought startled Agnes, disturbed her-yet, inexplicably, it also poured a measure of warm comfort into her chilled heart..As quick as a snake strikes, Vanadium was much closer to the bed than he had been when he tossed the coin, at Junior's side now, leaning over the railing. "Naomi was six weeks pregnant." The old woman crumpled with a papery rustle, as though she were an elaborately folded piece of origami. She would be unconscious for a while, and after she came around, she probably wouldn't remember who she was, let alone what make of car she'd been driving, until Junior was well out of Eugene..Focus. Get Ichabod all the way inside. Act now, think later. No, no, proper focus requires an understanding of the need to ize: scrutinize, analyze, and prioritize. Get the bitch, get the bitch! Slow deep breaths. Channel the beautiful rage. A fully evolved man is self-controlled and calm. Move, move, move!..He carried the mug to the sink, poured the brew down the drain and saw the cooler standing in the corner. He hadn't noticed it before. A medium-size, molded-plastic, Styrofoam-lined ice chest, of the type you filled with beer and took on picnics..The lid of the cooler wasn't on as tight as it ought to have been. From around one edge slipped a thin and sinuous stream of smoke. Something on fire..The stump was capped at the end of the internal cuneiform, depriving Junior of everything from the metatarsal to the tip of the toe. He was delighted with this result, because successful reattachment would have been a calamity..Nolly sighed. "Well, I guess if you were going to just plug him, you could've done that already, soon as you got to town." "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..If Junior had not been such a rational man, schooled in logic and reason by the books of Caesar Zedd, he might have snapped there in the street, before the photograph of Seraphim, might have begun to shake and sob and babble until he wound up in a psychiatric ward. But although his trembling knees felt no more supportive than aspic, they didn't dissolve under him. He couldn't breathe for a

minute, and his vision darkened at the periphery, and the noise of passing traffic suddenly sounded like the agonized shrieks of people tortured beyond endurance, but he held fast to his wits long enough to realize that the name under the photo, which served as the centerpiece of a poster, read Celestina White in four-inch letters, not Seraphim. He had recently learned about the demigods of classic mythology in one of the selections from the Book-of-the-Month Club. When Junior complained of severe thirst, Victoria explained that he was to have nothing by mouth until morning. He would be put on a liquid diet for breakfast and lunch. Soft foods might be allowable by dinnertime tomorrow. At last: the humiliating backless gown, the precious drugs, even a pretty nurse who seemed to like him, and then oblivion. 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. summoned an expression no less dubious than that of a policeman listening to the alibi of a suspect with bloody hands. Then: "I'm quite sure that Wroth Griskin does not make candlesticks. If that's what you're looking for, I'd recommend the housewares department at Gump's." Nolly liked to watch her hands while she worked. They were slim, graceful, the hands of an adolescent girl. In a magazine article about the hero, passing mention was made of a restaurant where occasionally the great man ate breakfast. From the corn soup to the baked ham to the plum pudding, he did not speak of his dry walk in wet weather. Two high-quality deadbolt locks. Sufficient protection against the average intruder, but inadequate to keep out a self-improved man with channeled anger. As if vengeful spirits weren't trouble enough, he had for three years been struggling unwittingly against the terrible power of the minister's curse, black Baptist voodoo that made his life miserable. He knew now why he had been plagued by violent nervous emesis, by epic diarrhea, by hideously disfiguring hives. The failure to find a heart mate, the humiliation with Renee Vivi, the two nasty cases of gonorrhea, the disastrous meditative catatonia, the inability to learn French and German, his loneliness, his emptiness, his thwarted attempts to find and kill the bastard boy born of Phimie's womb: All these things and more, much more, were the hateful consequences of the vicious, vindictive voodoo of that hypocritical Christian. As a highly self-improved, fully evolved, committed man who was comfortable with his raw instincts, Junior should be sailing through life on calm seas, under perpetually sunny skies, with his sails always full of wind, but instead he was constantly cruelly battered and storm-tossed through an unrelenting night, not because of any shortcomings of mind or heart, or character, but because of black magic. The moonlight had faded and the gentle waves had ebbed out of his mind's eye. He concentrated, trying to force the phantom sea to flow back into view, but this was one of those rare occasions when a Zedd technique failed him. "Frequently, symptoms appear early enough that radiation therapy in one or both eyes has a chance to succeed. Sometimes strabismus-in which one eye diverges from the other, either inward toward the nose or outward toward the temple-can be an early sign, though more often we're alerted when the patient reports problems with vision." Reluctantly, Jacob finally returned the cards to the packs and admitted to himself that superstition had seized him and would not let go. Somewhere in the world was a knave, a human monster-even worse, according to Maria, a man as fearsome as the devil himself-and for reasons unknown, this beast wanted to harm little Barty, an innocent baby. By some grace that Jacob could not understand, they had been warned, through the cards, that the knave was coming. They had been warned. "No pie!" Agnes agreed. She parenthesized his head with her hands and punctuated his sweet face with kisses. Vanadium nodded. "And I'd like to hear about Cain's reactions in more detail. I've read your reports, of course, and they've been thorough, but necessarily condensed. There'll be lots of subtleties that only reveal themselves in conversation. Often, the apparently insignificant details are the most important to me when I'm devising strategy." 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. His musical abilities were most likely an offshoot of his more extraordinary talent for math. He said that music was numbers, and what he seemed to mean was that he could all but instantly translate the notes of any song into a personal numerical code, retain it, and repeat the song by repeating the memorized sequence of code. When he read sheet music, he saw arrangements of numbers. 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.

[Des Fumeurs d'Opium Et Des Fumeurs de Tabac Mimore Lu i l'Academie d'Amiens 26 Aout 1865](#)

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