

A STUDY GUIDE FOR YUSEF KOMUNYAKAAS SLAM DUNK HOOK

So keep moving. Don't get hung up on the disgusting aftermath. Keep whistling along like a runaway train. Clean up, clean out, roll on..He looked at the two cards following the four of clubs in the stack. Neither of these was a jack of spades, either, and both were what he anticipated.. "Yes, you did, and it's exactly what experience has no doubt taught you to think. But I'm forty-seven and you're twenty-". "I've seen them," Tom assured her. "My dear, you've never smelled anything better than a field full of bacon vines.". "Who hired him to hex the ship, fool?". Likewise, she wasn't prepared to deal with a monster like the father, if one day he came for Angel. And he would come. She knew. In these events as in all things, Celestina White glimpsed a pattern, complex and mysterious, and to the eye of an artist, the symmetry of the design required that one day the father would come. She wasn't prepared to deal with the creep now, but by the time that he arrived, she would be ready for him..He threw away his necktie, because in the elevator, on the way down from Renee's-or Rene's--penthouse, and again on the walk back to his apartment, he had scrubbed his tongue with it. On further consideration, he threw away everything that he had been wearing, including his shoes.. "Would you pretend to wake up if I tried to smother you?" asked Detective Vanadium.. "The princess is correct," he acknowledged, revealing that this hand was still empty. Then he reached to the girl and plucked the quarter from her ear..The sound made by the dropping corpse indicated that cushioning trash lined the bottom of the bin, and also that it was no more than half full. This improved chances that Neddy wouldn't be discovered until a dump truck tumbled him into a landfill-and even then perhaps no eyes would alight upon him again except those of hungry rats..The previously flat, monotonous voice had in it now a subtle but undeniable new roundness of tone: "And every human being, every living thing, is a string on that instrument.".As "It is." From a desk drawer, Nolly withdrew an envelope and put it on top of the offered cash. "I'm returning five hundred of your thousand retainer." He pushed everything back toward Junior..The Hackachaks were present, of course. Junior had not yet agreed to join them in their pursuit of blood money. They would give him little privacy or rest until they had what they wanted..In the foyer again, about six feet inside the front door, he stood the wineglass on the floor. He placed the bottle of Merlot beside the glass, the red rose beside the bottle..At the grave, they arrived with red and white roses. Agnes carried the red, and Barty brought the white..When she still didn't meet his stare, he seized her by the chin and tipped her head back..Frowning, Agnes said. "Yes, those stories. Sweetie, when Uncle Edom and Uncle Jacob go on about big storms blowing people away and explosions blowing people up ... that's not what life's about.".Celestina sensed an easy camaraderie between these two men, but also tension that was perhaps related to the reference to an illegal search..Raise high the candlestick. In spite of the masking music, breathe shallowly and through the mouth. Remain poised, ready..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..Although she knew how, and although she knew the pointlessness of asking why, Agnes asked, "Why? Oh, Lord, why must a blind boy climb a tree?". "Will I love you tomorrow, you mean, and the day after tomorrow, and on forever? Of course, forever, Wally, always.".Retracing his path across the kitchen, he caught a faint whiff of jasmine from the backyard. Funny, jasmine here inside. Two paces later, he felt a draft..During Barty's hospitalization, they had graduated from the young adult novels by Robert Heinlein to some of the same author's science fiction for general audiences. Now, pajamaed and in bed, with his sunglasses on the nightstand but his padded eye patches still in place, Barty listened, rapt, to the beginning of Double Star."Toes," he repeated immediately in his sweet, piping voice. This was a new word for him..In all their years, neither twin had ever set foot beyond the limits of Bright Beach. They both appeared nervous but determined..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..In the morning, after their first night together, without either of them suggesting what must be done, Barty and Angel went in silence into the backyard and, together, climbed the oak, to watch the sunrise from its highest bower. Three years later, on Easter Sunday in 1986, the fabled bunny brought them a gift: Angel gave birth to Mary. "It's time for a nice ordinary name in this family," she declared..Trying to ignore his phantom toe, which itched furiously, he searched the apartment. He proceeded carefully, determined not to shoot himself in the foot accidentally this time..Of course, Angel might have been playing around with the talking book. Or, even though she'd left the dolls downstairs, she might have been filling the time until Barty's return by having a nice chat with Miss Pixie and Miss Velveeta. She had other voices, too, for other dolls, and one for a sock puppet named Smelly..By the grace of Caesar Zedd and Remy Martin, Junior eventually slipped into undulant currents of sleep, and as he drifted away on those velvet tides, he took some solace from the thought that come what may, December 29 would be a better day than December 28..Her awful sense of weightlessness became something much better: buoyancy, an exhilarating lightness of spirit. Fear remained with her-fear for Barty, fear of the future and of the strange complexity of Creation that she'd just glimpsed-but wonder and wild hope now tempered it..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..He stopped for lunch at a restaurant with a spectacular view of the Pacific, framed by massive pines..Everyone confronted Agnes with expressions of puzzlement and expectation, and she looked from one to another. Paul. Maria. Francesca. Bonita. Grace. Edom. Jacob. Finally Celestina..He was in the kitchen at 11:20, spreading frosting on a large

chocolate sheet cake while the reverend expertly frosted a coconut-layer job.. "I can talk to you," he said to Salk. "You'll understand. She was hero, the only one I ever knew till I met you. I've read about them all my life, in pulp magazines and paperbacks. But Perri ... she was the real thing. She didn't save tens of thousands-hundreds of thousands of children like you've done, didn't change the world as you've changed it, but she faced every day without complaint, and she lived for others. Not through them. For them. People called her to share their problem, and she listened and cared, and they called her with their good news because she took such joy in it. They asked for her advice, and though she was inexperienced, really, so short of experience in so many ways, she always knew what to say, Dr. Salk. Always the right thing. She had great heart and natural wisdom, and she cared so much." terrified, the thorns pricking so close to his eyes, green points combing his lashes. He's too weak to resist, disabled. 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..He snatched up the wine list before she could look at it. "If you're paying, then I'm ordering whatever costs the most, regardless of what it tastes like." Frowning at him, she said, "You don't mind them around, do you, Joey? They're eccentric, but I love them very much..It could only be made better by the presence of her parents. They had planned to fly down to San Francisco this morning, but late yesterday, a parishioner and close friend had died. A minister and his wife sometimes had duties to the flock that superseded all else..What he saw next in the brochure wasn't the link that he sought, but it alarmed him so much that the three-fold pamphlet rattled in his hands. The reception for Celestina's show had been this evening, had ended more than three hours ago." "Maybe it's not where the heart is," Wally corrected himself. "Maybe it's where the buffalo roam." He went directly to the kitchen and drew a glass of water at the sink faucet. He swallowed two antiemetic tablets that he had brought with him, to guard against vomiting..Not understanding, thinking that he was inexplicably asking if she loved him, she said, "Yes, of course, you silly bear, you stupid man, of course, I love you." body on the flight out of San Francisco. When finally her obligations were met, she..Nor could she begin to imagine the nature of the disaster that had befallen him, leaving his face looking blasted and loose at all its hinges. She had last seen him at Phimie's funeral. A few minutes ago at her doorstep, she'd recognized him only because of his port-wine birthmark..lawn before they knew that the prodigy's invisible cloak wouldn't accommodate him as it did the girl. Cool, drenching rain pounded Tom at once, and he scooped Barty off the steps as Grace had gathered up..His first year in San Francisco was an eventful one for the nation and the world. Winston Churchill, arguably the greatest man of the century thus far, died. The United States launched the first air strikes against North Vietnam, and Lyndon Johnson raised troop levels to 150,000 in that conflict. A Soviet cosmonaut was the first to take a space walk outside an orbiting craft. Race riots raged in Watts for five fiery days. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was signed into law. Sandy Koufax, a Los Angeles Dodger, pitched a perfect game, in which no hitter reached first base. T. S. Eliot died, and Junior purchased one of the poet's works through the Book-of-the-Month Club. Other famous people passed away: Stan Laurel, Nat King Cole, Le Corbusier, Albert Schweitzer, Somerset Maugham.... Indira Gandhi became the first woman prime minister of India, and the Beatles' inexplicable and annoying success rolled on and on..He got everything he ordered-full value, and more. When he lifted off the top of the bun to squeeze mustard onto the burger, he discovered a shiny quarter pressed into the half-melted cheese..Having been so wounded by one death, Celestina could not imagine how Lipscomb could have survived the loss of his entire family. Pity knotted her heart and cinched her throat so that she spoke in little more than a whisper: "Was that the American Airlines. . ." The pendulous bellies of the rain-swollen clouds were no darker than when he had first come to the cemetery, yet they appeared more ominous now than earlier..He could have killed someone named Henry or Larry, without risk of creating a Bartholomew pattern that would prick like a pungent scent in the hound-dog nostrils of Bay Area homicide detectives. But he restrained himself..The subtle distortions in his vision, which caused lines of type to twist, didn't appear to trouble Barty much otherwise. He moved as quickly and as surely as ever, with his special grace..She might have attributed his problem to eyestrain from all the reading he'd done during the past few days. She might have put drops in his eyes, told him to leave the books alone for a while, and sent him into the backyard to play. She might have counseled herself not to be one of those alarmist mothers who detected pneumonia in every sniffle, a brain tumor behind every headache..During the preparation of the cards, Barty had fallen asleep in his mother's arms, but with the revelation of his name on the ace, he had awakened again, perhaps because with his head resting on her bosom, he was alarmed by the sudden acceleration of her heartbeat..A blood test might prove that Junior was the father. Accusations might sooner or later be made against him by bitter and hate-filled members of her family, perhaps not even with the hope of sending him to prison, but solely for the purpose of getting their hands on a sizable part of his fortune, in the form of child support..Occasionally, when Junior returned home from a day of gallery hopping or an evening at a restaurant, Industrial Woman-the artist's title-scared away his mellow mood. More than once, he'd cried out in alarm before realizing this was just his prized Poriferan..The detective wasn't the only person in the world who liked "Someone to Watch over Me." Anyone in the lounge might have requested it. Or maybe this number was part of the pianist's usual repertoire..Sometimes Barty could be fierce in his independence-his mother told him so-and now he rebuffed Angel too sharply. "I don't want to be waited on. I'm not helpless, you know. I can get sodas myself" By the time he reached the doorway, he felt sorry for his tone, and he looked back toward where the window seat must be. "Angel?" 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..Following a splendid lunch, having just left the fourth gallery on his list and strolling toward the fifth, Junior didn't at once see the source of the quarters. Indeed, when the first three rapid-fire coins hit the side of his face, he didn't even know what they were. Startled, he flinched and looked down as he heard them

ring off the sidewalk..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."..As if a door had briefly opened between this windless day and another world, a single gust rattled rain against the windows..Though she worried that reading would strain his eyes, worsening his condition, she recognized the irrationality of her fear. Muscles don't atrophy from use, nor eyes wear out from too much seeing..He slapped her hands, knocking the sharpener and the pencil out of her grasp. They clattered against the window, fell onto the window-seat cushions..This morning, as Barty stood to one side listening, his mother asked Maria for poems by Emily Dickinson..In the glamorous cocktail lounge of this elegant hotel, Junior was necessarily forced to use other of Zedd's techniques-and more brandy--to liberate from his subconscious the name of the caller on the Ansaphone. Max. The caller had said, It's Max..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..Junior examined the music collection. The policeman's taste ran to big band music and vocalists from the swing era..Then the hero got in the sedan with his friends, and they drove away into the sun-splashed morning..Instead, her father asked, "Is this emotion talking, Celie, or is this brain as much as heart?".The girl smiled, as stunningly beautiful as he remembered her, but she was no longer fifteen, as she had been when last he'd seen her. Since her death in childbirth nearly three years ago, she'd matured and grown lovelier than ever..If he woke, however, and saw her sitting vigil, Barty would understand how terrible his condition might be.."December 1, 1958, in Chicago, Illinois, a parochial-school fire killed ninety-five."..At Thanksgiving dinner, again at the three tables set end to end, in the year of the triple zero, Mary Lampion, now fourteen years old, made an interesting announcement over the pumpkin pie. In her travels where none but she could go, after seven fascinating years of exploring a fraction of all the infinite worlds, she said she sensed beyond doubt that, as Barty's mother had told him on her deathbed, there is one special place beyond all the ways things are, one shining place..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.....murdered would be discounted. And if every death was suspicious to him, then he would quickly lose interest in Junior and move on to a new enthusiasm, harassing some other poor devil.."Having spent most of the last twenty years in this apartment, not being the one who has a car, how would I meet a Negro magician?".Highly impressed by the spot-on hyena scream with which Frieda had purged herself of the childhood emotional trauma inflicted by an authoritarian grandmother, Junior asked her to go out with him..Since the cops believed that Junior accidentally shot himself while searching for a nonexistent burglar, he was already in their book as an idiot. If he tried to explain how Vanadium had tormented him with the quarter, and how a quarter turned up, of all places, in his cheeseburger, they would figure him for a hopeless hysteric..Meanwhile, she could offer him only a few pieces of ice, which he was forbidden to chew. "Let them melt in your mouth."..When Agnes crunched the ice, the nurse said, "No, no. Don't swallow it all at once. Let it melt."..This was a memory, not a real voice. Even after you became an accomplished meditator, the mind resisted this degree of blissful oblivion and tried to sabotage it with aural and visual memories..The big-headed, bulging-eyed, slit-mouthed runt had collected \$850,000 from Naomi's death, so the least he could do was provide a little information. He'd probably bill for the time, anyway..Junior wasn't concerned that the shots would attract unwanted attention. These large rural properties and a plenitude of muffling trees made it unlikely that the nearest neighbor would hear anything..He couldn't work up sufficient saliva to get the rasp out of his voice: "Then you could learn to do it."..-and wherever he went, between his shows, he always gave free performances at nursing homes, schools for the deaf-".When she looked up from Barty, she saw the attorney with his hands full of documents. "Surprise? I know what's in Joey's will.".."You'll catch pneumonia," she warned, reaching across the boy to flip the passenger's-side vent toward him.."After Elfarran and Morred perished and the Isle of Solea sank beneath the sea, the Council of the Wise governed for the child Serriadh until he took the throne. His reign was bright but brief. The kings who followed him in Enlad were seven, and their realm increased in peace and wealth. Then the dragons came to raid among the western lands, and wizards went out in vain against them. King Akambar moved the court from Berila in Enlad to the City of Havnor, whence he sent out his fleet against invaders from the Kargad Lands and drove them back into the East. But still they sent raiding ships even as far as the Inmost Sea. Of the fourteen Kings of Havnor the last was Maharion, who made peace both with the dragons and the Kargs, but at great cost. And after the Ring of the Runes was broken, and Erreth-Akbe died with the great dragon, and Maharion the Brave was killed by treachery, it seemed that no good thing happened in the Archipelago..The 9-mm pistol and the ammunition were on the foyer table. With trembling hands, Junior tore open the boxes and loaded the gun."..July 6, 1944, in Hartford, Connecticut, a fire broke out in the great tent of the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus at two-forty in the afternoon, while six thousand patrons watched the Wallendas, a world-famous high-wire troupe, ascend to begin their act. By three o'clock, the fire burned out, following the collapse of the flaming tent, leaving one hundred sixty-eight dead. Another five hundred people were badly injured, but one thousand circus animals-including forty lions and forty elephants-were not harmed."..At eleven o'clock Saturday morning, having just settled in the hotel after arriving from St. Mary's, they were waiting for the SFPD to deliver suitcases of clothes and toiletries

that Rena Moller, Celestina's neighbor, had packed according to her instructions. While waiting, the three of them took an early lunch-or a late breakfast-at a room service table in the living room..He was a pretty good detective, but as regarded the minutiae of daily life, he wasn't as organized as he would like to be. He never remembered to set aside his holey socks for darning; and once he had worn a hat with a bullet hole in it for nearly a year before he'd at last thought to buy a new one..Although the girl was unable to articulate why she preferred not to have her mother at her side, they all understood the tumult in her heart. She couldn't bear to subject her gentle and proper mother to the shame and embarrassment that she herself felt so keenly and that she imagined would grow intolerably worse in the hours or days ahead, until and even after the birth.. "Then you have a big advantage, and you'll have to tell us all about yourselves," Agnes said. "I'll get the coffee brewing ... unless you'd like to help." After supper in a roadside diner, Paul returned to his room and studied a tattered map of the western United States, the latest of several he'd worn out over the years. Depending on the weather and the steepness of the terrain, he might be able to reach Spruce Hills, Oregon, in ten days.. "Just now." Although Angel tried to sound nonchalant, she was trembling. "I'm not sure I can do it again." Fully clothed, she lay atop the bedspread. She intended to listen to a little classical music before brushing her teeth..."They're all the family I have," Junior said with what he hoped sounded like sorrow and long-suffering love..His first word after mama was papa, which she taught him while showing him pictures of Joey. His third word: pie..spades. Friday night, she had ripped the cards in thirds and had been carrying the twelve pieces with her since then, waiting for this quiet Sunday evening..She wasn't listening closely to him. Numb. She felt as though she were half anesthetized. She was looking past him, at nothing, and his Voice seemed to be coming to her through several layers of surgical masks, though he now wore none at all..Alone again with Wally, Celestina said, "They told me that once you regained consciousness, I can only visit ten minutes at a time, and not that often, either." When you construct or reconstruct a world that never existed, a wholly fictional history, the research is of a somewhat different order, but the basic impulse and techniques are much the same. You look at what happens and try to see why it happens, you listen to what the people there tell you and watch what they do, you think about it seriously, and you try to tell it honestly, so that the story will have weight and make sense..Besides, he wasn't on the Greenbaum Gallery customer list and didn't have an invitation..Widening his eyes in calculated surprise, Junior said, "Are you a police officer?". The pewter bludgeon slammed into the back of his skull with a hard pack. The scalp tore, blood sprang forth, and the man fell as hard as Victoria had fallen under the influence of a good Merlot, although he went facedown, not faceup as she had done..The subcontractor who built the quarter-spitting coin boxes was James Hunnicolt, but everyone called him Jimmy Gadget. He specialized in electronic eavesdropping, building cameras and recorders into the most unlikely objects, but he could do just about anything requiring inventive mechanical design and construction..A spirit-shredding bleakness clawed at her, but she couldn't permit it to leave her in tatters. If she traded hope for despair, as her brothers had done, Bartholomew would be finished before he'd begun. She owed him optimism, lessons in the joy of life..During the walk home: slow and deep, breathing slow and deep, moving not at a brisk clip, but strolling, trying to let the tension slide away, striving to focus on good things like his full exemption from military service and his purchase of the Sklent painting..get his hackles up if we, at the state level, still want to poke around a little..of fists, hard blows, and his father's heavy breathing as he deals out the punishment. Edom himself lies face down in Heaven, and his words touched a tenderness in her, overlaying an arc of pain across the curve of her smile..She was not going to be as forthright with Barty as she had insisted that Joshua Nunn be with her, in part because she was too shaken to risk forthrightness..Hope became easier to sustain when late 1966 and 1967 brought the biggest advance in women's fashions since the invention of the sewing needle: the miniskirt, and then the micromini. Already, Mary Quant-of all things, a British designer-had conquered England and Europe with her splendid creation; now she brought America out of the dark ages of psychopathic modesty..Sobbing desperately, he dropped the telephone handset on the secretary, seized the dishtowel. He wrapped the cloth tightly around the shattered stump, applying pressure to diminish the bleeding..To the waiter, Nolly was Nolly, Kathleen was Mrs. Wulfstan, and Tom Vanadium was sir--though not the usual perfunctorily polite sir, but sir with deferential emphasis. Tom was unknown to the waiter, but his shattered face gave him gravitas; besides, he possessed a quality, quite separate from carriage and demeanor and attitude, an ineffable something, that inspired respect and even trust..THE DEAD DETECTIVE, grinning in the moonlight, a pair of silvery quarters gleaming in the sockets once occupied by his eyes..Maria stood at the bedside, leaning with her forearms against the railing. A silver-and-onyx rosary tightly wrapped her small brown hands, although she was not counting the beads or murmuring Hail Marys. Her prayer was for Agnes's baby..Dinner was cooking in the upper of the two ovens. He switched the bottom oven, setting it at warm, and dropped open the door..use it. The cop was no threat to the English army, as Joan had been, but as far as Junior was concerned, the creep most definitely deserved to be burned at the stake..He considered himself to be a thoroughly useless man, taking up space in a world to which he contributed nothing, but he did have a talent for baking. He could take any recipe, even one from a world-class pastry chef, and improve upon it..Extracting documents from his valise, Vinnie said, "Well, I've no right to talk. Food is my obsession. Look at me, so fat you'd think I'd been raised from birth for sacrifice." This was the same woman who had been stripping the second bed when Celestina arrived earlier. Now she was here to remake the first..Awed, dropping to one knee before Barty, Tom fingered the sleeve of the boy's shirt..Because the glass wings of the open window didn't lie flat against the exterior wall, they blocked his view. He had to thrust himself farther through the opening, until he seesawed on the sill, before he could see the length of the entire block, in which the gallery stood at approximately the middle..Even as the morning matured, the fog and the rain conspired to bar all but a faint gray daylight from St. Mary's. Shadows flourished..Paul knelt on one knee beside her wheelchair. "This momentous day, Agnes. This momentous day, with all of its

beginnings. Hmmm?" 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. Agnes prepared a dinner to indulge him: hot dogs with cheese, potato chips. Root beer instead of milk. Jacob had been born with the requisite dexterity and more than sufficient memory function. His personality disorder—which made him unemployable and guaranteed that his social life would never involve endless rounds of parties—ensured that he would have the free time needed to practice the most difficult techniques of card manipulation until he mastered them. Many police agencies required an officer to carry a firearm even when off duty. If the Oregon State Police had no such rule, Vanadium most likely carried one anyway, because in his crazy-as-a-snake mind, Knickknacks and mementos were not to be found anywhere in the house. And until now Junior had seen nothing hanging on the barren walls except a calendar in the kitchen. "No. It's, stopped. The thing now is to prevent a recurrence of the emesis, which could trigger more bleeding. He's getting antinausea medication and replacement electrolytes intravenously, and we've applied ice bags to his midsection to reduce the chance of further abdominal-muscle spasms and to help control inflammation." Grace White was petite, and Paul wasn't. Otherwise he might not have been able to halt her determined rush toward her husband, might not have been able to scoop her off her feet and, carrying her in his arms, spirit her to safety. ". . . then how come you couldn't walk where your eyes were healthy and leave the tumors there," she remembered. In a swirl of London Fog and righteous indignation, Neddy turned his back on Junior and drifted away through the nibbling, nattering crowd. She could see now what she hadn't seen when running with him through the cemetery, because she was looking directly at him. Yet even seeing did not make it easy to believe. "She was a hero, just like you. I wanted you . . . I wanted you to see her and to know her name. Perri Damascus. That was her name." That was another thing. Junior hadn't gotten his noon meal, because the spirit of Vanadium had nearly caught up with him when he'd been browsing for tie chains and silk pocket squares before lunch. Then he missed dinner, as well, because he had to maintain surveillance on Celestina when she didn't go straight home from the gallery. He was hungry. He was starving. This, too, she had done to him. The bitch. After the stupid bastards read a newspaper or smoked a few cigarettes, they finally broke down the door. Satisfyingly dramatic: the crack of splintering wood, the crash. On the counter beside the bathroom sink stood an open box of BandAids in a variety of sizes, a bottle of rubbing alcohol, and a bottle of iodine. Now out of the kitchen, along the hall, and up the stairs, two at a time, into Victoria's bedroom. Not with the intention of snaring a perverse souvenir. Merely to find a blanket. Frequently, these days, she found herself explaining aspects of life to Barty that she hadn't expected to discuss for years to come. She wondered how she could make him understand this: Life can be so sweet, so full, that sometimes happiness is nearly as intense as anguish, and the pressure of it in the heart swells close to pain. "You're the one who said your cold's just here. Maybe it stays in the kitchen, hoping it'll get a piece of pie."

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