

THE COURSE AND OTHER LINES

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..Agnes was so weary, her eyes so sore and grainy, that even this soft radiance stung. She almost closed her eyes and gave herself to sleep again, that little brother of Death, which was now her only solace. What she saw in the lamplight, however, compelled her attention..He feared that suicide was a ticket to Hell, and he knew that sinless Perri was not waiting for him in those lower realms..His Country Squire laden with cookies, plum cakes, homemade caramel corn with almonds, and gifts, Edom drove directly home from Obadiah Sepharad's place, which had been their final stop. He roared away as if trying to outrun tornadoes and tidal waves..He desperately needed closure in the matter of Naomi's death. That was what these past three years and these supernatural events were all about..The two women stared at each other, and at last Celestina said, "Good Lord, what's happening here?".Holding on to the jamb with one hand, Barty leaned across the threshold, listening to the day. Birds. Softly rustling leaves. Nobody on the porch. Even trying hard to be quiet, people always made some little noise.. "That's kind of you," Panglo stammered, "but I have little time for reading, very little time..".Agnes had the craziest notion that he was counting them, when at is age, Of course, he would have no concept of numbers..Junior kept a file on each man, nevertheless, in case instinct later told him that one of them was, in fact, his mortal enemy. He could have killed all of them, just to be safe, but a multitude of dead Bartholomews, even spread over several jurisdictions, would sooner or later attract too much police attention..Maria looked stricken when she answered the doorbell, for she intuited that a visit, instead of a call, meant the worst..An alley opened on Junior's left. He stepped out of the crowd, into this narrow service way shaded by tall buildings, and walked even more briskly, still not quite running because he continued to believe that he possessed the unshakable calm and self-control of a highly self improved man..We know a dozen different Arthurs now, all of them true. The Shire changed irrevocably even in Bilbos lifetime. Don Quixote went riding out to Argentina and met Jorge Luis Borges there. Plus c'est la meme chose, plus fa change..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..".When Agnes and Paul returned from a honeymoon in Carmel, they discovered that Edom had finally cleared out Jacob's apartment. He donated his twin's extensive files and books to a university library that was building a collection to satisfy a growing professorial and student interest in apocalyptic studies and paranoid philosophy..Following a month of recuperation and postoperative medical care, Junior was able to return to his twice-a-week classes in art appreciation. He resumed, as well, his almost daily strolls through the city's better galleries and fine museums.. "Nonsense," Agnes breezed on, "it's no imposition. You'll be a great help with my baking, the pie deliveries, all the work that I put aside during Barty's surgery and recovery. It'll either be fun, or I'll wear you down to the bone, but either way, you won't be bored. I've got two extra rooms. One for Celie and Angel, and one for Grace. When your Wally arrives, we can move Angel in with Grace, or she can bunk with me..".No, impossible. He had killed Victoria almost a year and a half before this phone call. When you were dead, you were gone forever..After a minute, he slipped his hand into his pocket. The quarter was still there..Carrying him to the window, gazing up at the stars, the moon, she said, "I'll always read to you, Barty..".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..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.. "This is most incommensurate," Junior said, recalling the word from a vocabulary-improvement course, without need of ice applied to the genitals.. "I'm not sure which is more unusual-the site of the eruption, the number of boils, or the size of them..".Just as Celestina snapped shut the latches on the suitcase and turned to the door, a nurse's aide entered, pushing a cart loaded with towels and bed linens.. "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..".Barty's release from Hoag Presbyterian had been delayed by an infection, and thereafter he had spent three days in a Newport-area rehabilitation hospital. Rehab consisted largely of orientation to his new dark world, since his lost function could not be recovered by either diligent exercise or therapy.. "Peach, raisin, walnut pies," Agnes said, "with regular bottom crust and a chocolate-crackle top crust..".Grace, Celestina, and Paul expressed amusement and amazement at Angel's critical judgment..Candle flames blurred into bright smears, and the faces of her good parents shimmered like the half-seen countenances of angels in dreams..With everyone in the diner now aware of Junior, with every head turned toward him and with every wary eye tracking him, he dropped the bun cap and the mustard dispenser on the floor. Barging through the swinging gate at the end of the lunch counter, he entered the narrow work area behind it..Everywhere in the fabled city, calves and knees and magnificent expanses of taut thighs were on display. This brought out the dreamy romantic in Junior, and more than ever he yearned desperately for the perfect woman, the ideal lover, the matching half of his incomplete heart.. "You know Mommy," Barty said, almost desperately sponging up the sight of his little girl's face and wringing the images into his memory to sustain him in the next long darkness..Wally had disposed of his properties in San Francisco under Tom's careful

supervision. Any attempt to trace him from the city to Bright Beach would fail. His vehicles were purchased through a corporation, and his new house had been bought through a trust named after his late wife. "Could you throw an Oreo someplace you weren't blind or maybe someplace Wally wasn't shot?" "Oh, dear God," she whispered, and although she had always been a strong woman who stood on a rock of faith, who drew hope as well as air with every breath, she was as weak now as the unborn child in her womb, sick with fear. Shrieking like carrion-eating birds waiting for their wounded dinner to die, the Hackachaks twice drew stern warnings from nurses. They were told to quiet down and respect the patients in neighboring rooms. Never had the familiar red Bicycle design of the U.S. Playing Card Company looked ominous before, but it was fearsome now, as strange voodoo veve or satanic conjuration pattern. They were in the eastern hills, a mile from Jolene and Bill Kleifton's place, where ten days ago, Edom had delivered blueberry pie along with the grisly details of the Tokyo-Yokohama quake of 1923. The boy-wonder physician turned to Junior again and assumed an expression of compassion so inauthentic that if he'd been playing a doctor on even the cheesiest daytime soap opera, he'd have been stripped of his actor's-union card, fired, and possibly horsewhipped on a live television special. "We'll be doing the procedure this afternoon, so I wouldn't want to give you anything much for the pain just prior to anesthesia and sedation. But don't you worry, Mr. Pinchbeck. Once we've lanced these boils, when you wake up, ninety percent of the pain will be gone." By the time Junior passed the three offices and found the men's room, Neddy had occupied it. The door was locked, which must mean this was a single-occupant john. This graciousness didn't free Paul to speak. Instead, he felt his throat thicken, trapping his voice more tightly still. "It's all right," Tom assured her. To Angel, he said, "No, I'm not sad. And you know why?" Packed full of aftermath, the movie was too violent for Junior's taste. He had wanted to meet at a showing of *Doctor Dolittle* or *The Graduate*. But Google, as paranoid as a lab rat after half a lifetime of electroshock experiments, insisted on choosing the theater. "No, the more I think about it, the more it feels like this is just kids. Some kids goofing around, that's all. I- guess Vanadium got deeper under my skin than I realized, so when this came up, I couldn't think straight about it." Luck favored Paul: The hero was here, having breakfast. He and two other men were deep in conversation at a corner table. He knew that the only movement in those staring, sightless eyes was the restless reflection of the flashlight beam as he probed the trash with it. He knew he was being irrational, but nevertheless he was reluctant to turn his back on the corpse. Repeatedly in the midst of searching, he snapped his head up, whipping his attention to Neddy, certain that from the corner of his eye, he had seen the dead gaze following him. "Guilt," said the detective. "If he killed her, wouldn't an overwhelming sense of guilt be as likely as anguish to cause acute nervous emesis?" Livor mortis had already set in, blood draining to the lowest points of her body, leaving the fronts of her bare legs, one side of each bare arm, and her face ghastly pale. Vanadium couldn't know the whereabouts of the quarter. Besides, even when he'd swung the lunch tray over Junior's lap, the detective hadn't been close enough to pick the pocket of the robe. Dinner arrived, and Tom persuaded Celestina and Grace to come to the table for Angel's sake, even if they had no appetite. After so much chaos and confusion, the child needed stability and routine wherever they could be provided. Nothing brought a sense of order and normality to a disordered and distressing day more surely than the gathering of family and friends around a dinner table. "Living high. When I wasn't on the road, I had a fine house here in Bright Beach, not this rental shack I'm in now, but a nice little place with an ocean view. You can guess what went wrong." 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. He had sat here with a pencil, making shopping lists. Now, instead of a pencil, there was the Italian-made .22 pistol. At the elevators, the orderly suggested that Edom and Jacob take a second cab and meet them on the surgical floor. "I'm gonna dream about baby chickens," she told Celestina, "and if I'm all yellow, they'll think I'm one of them." Clearly, the musician recognized him, which seemed unlikely, even extraordinary, considering that they'd never spoken to each other, and considering that Junior must be only one of thousands of customers who had passed through that lounge in the past three years. "It's been a tough few years," he said. "Losing her ... and then getting out of Nam alive." Now, trouble. Different from what he'd experienced before but just as powerful and terrifying. He didn't need to regurgitate, but he desperately needed to evacuate. A flicker of complacency showed in Otters' tired, battered young face. "No," he said. "I don't think anybody can." and humble. They managed to worry up tuition for art school, but Celestina worked as a waitress to pay for her studio apartment and other needs. Maria fished another chip from the sweating carafe, rejected it, and scooped out a larger piece. She hesitated, staring at it for a moment, and then spooned it between Agnes's lips. "Water can't be broken if it will be first made into ice." The word diarrhea was inadequate to describe this affliction. In spite of the books he'd read to improve his vocabulary, Junior could not think of any word sufficiently descriptive and powerful enough to convey his misery and the hideousness of his ordeal. Maria's hand tamed, the card turned, and another knave of spades revolved into view, snapped against the table. Or perhaps the sorrow was less sadness than yearning. He had to move on, but he was loath to begin this strange journey without her. The singular beauty of San Francisco and the exquisite patina of its colorful history spoke to her heart and kindled in her such an unreasonable passion that she sometimes wondered, at least half seriously, if she had spent other lives here. Often, streets were wondrously familiar to her the first time that she set foot on them. Certain great houses, dating from the late 1800s and early 1900s, inspired her to imagine elegant parties thrown. When he heard the snick of the lock being disengaged, he rammied into the men's

room..efficiency of a nurse, but as a courtesan might perform the task: smiling enticingly, a flirtatious glimmer in."Only for a little while. Then he is joining me at the gallery, and after the show's over, we're having dinner together."Houses made settling noises all the time. That was one reason why he couldn't rely much on sound to guide him through the darkness. A noise he thought had been made by the weight of his tread might as easily have been produced by the house itself as it adjusted to the.Junior had learned implode from a self-help book about how to improve your vocabulary and be well-spoken. At the time, he had thought that this word-among others in the. lists he memorized-was one he would never use. Now it was the perfect description of how he felt: as if he were going to implode..Magusson considered the assaults on Victoria and on Vanadium to be hideous crimes, of course, but he also viewed them as affronts to his own dignity and reputation. He expected a felonious client, rewarded with four and a quarter million instead of jail time, to be grateful and thereafter to walk a straight line.."This was back on January 24, 1556," said Edom with unhesitating authority, for he had memorized tens of thousands of facts about the worst natural disasters in history.."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-".Reverend White's murder received significant coverage throughout the nation, especially in West Coast papers, because of its perceived racial motivation and because it involved the burning of a parsonage..Hound meant well in sending the young man to Samory, but he did not understand the quality of Otter's will. Nor did Otter himself. He was too used to obeying others to see that in fact he had always followed his own bent, and too young to believe that anything he did could kill him..She struggled, wept, pretended disgust, faked shame, swore to bring the police down on him. Another man, not as highly skilled at reading men as Junior, might have thought the girl's resistance was genuine, Sat her charges of rape were sincere. Any other man might have backed off, but Junior was neither fooled nor confused..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..Solitude, however, was his preference. He found the sympathy of friends unbearable, a constant reminder that Perri was gone..She hadn't sung since the early-morning hours of October 18, and no other paranormal event had occurred since then. The waiting between manifestations scraped at Junior's nerves worse than the manifestations themselves..Simon Magusson, lacking family, had left his estate to Tom. This came as a surprise. The sum was so considerable that even though Tom was on a dispensation from his vows, which included his vow of property, he was uncomfortable with his fortune. His comfort was quickly restored by contributing the entire inheritance to Pie Lady Services. They had been brought together by two extraordinary children, by the conviction that Barty and Angel were part of some design of enormous consequence. But more often than not, God weaves patterns that become perceptible to us only over long periods of time, if at all. After the past three eventful years, there were now no weekly miracles, no signs in the earth or sky, no revelations from burning bushes or from more mundane forms of communication. Neither Barty nor Angel revealed any new astonishing talents, and in fact they were as ordinary as any two young prodigies can be, except that he was blind and she served as his eyes upon the world.."I'm sure you would be, yes, but I'm afraid I don't have the patience to teach, I'm a performer, not an instructor. I suppose I could give you the name of a good teacher." .Before Celestina probed and perhaps touched upon a sore tooth of truth, Tom launched into the story of King Obadiah, Pharaoh of the Fantastic, who had taught him all he knew about sleight of hand..Tom caused less of a stir in the restaurant than Kathleen had expected. Other diners noticed him, of course, but after one or two looks of shock or pity, they appeared indifferent, though this was undoubtedly the thinnest pretense of indifference. The same quality in him that elicited deferential regard from the waiter apparently ensured that others would be courteous enough to respect his privacy..The customers were in a mood, most of them grumbling about their ailments. Others complained about the dreary weather, the increasing number of kids zooming along sidewalks on these damn new skateboards, the recent tax increases, and the New York Jets paying Joe Namath the kingly sum of \$427,000 a year to play football, which some saw as a sign that the country was money-crazy and going to Hell..and proceeded to turn it across his knuckles as swiftly and smoothly as be bad with his right hand..Although Vanadium had been morally certain about the identity of his assailant, intuition without evidence was not sufficient to stir the authorities into action-not against a man on whom the state and county had settled \$4,250,000 in the matter of his wife's mortal fall. They would appear either to be incompetent in the investigation of Naomi Cain's death or to be pursuing Enoch in the new matter out of sheer vindictiveness. Without stacks of evidence, the political risks of acting on a policeman's instinct were too great..For guidance, Agnes couldn't rely entirely on any of the child rearing books in her library. Barty's unique gifts presented her with special parenting problems. Now, when he asked if he could stay up even later, to read about John Thomas Stuart and LummoX, John's pet from another world, she granted him permission..His alcohol-soured breath washed over Agnes as he asked, "How's Bartholomew doing, is he okay, is the little guy in good health?".SERAPHIM AETHIONEMA WHITE was nothing whatsoever like her name, except that she had as kind a heart and as good a soul as any among the hosts in Heaven. She did not have wings, as did the angels after which she had been named, and she couldn't sing as sweetly as the seraphim, either, for she had been blessed with a throaty voice and far too much humility to be a performer. Aethionema were delicate flowers, either pale-or rose-pink, and while this girl, just sixteen, was beautiful by any standard, she was not a delicate soul but a strong one, not likely to be shaken apart in even the highest wind.."When I couldn't get enough nightclub and theater bookings for my magic act anymore ... I turned to gambling." .Paul said, "I wanted you ... I don't know ... I just wanted you to see her. I wanted to say ... to say. . ." .His artificial eyes were almost a month old. He'd been through surgery to have the eye-moving muscles attached to the conjunctiva, and everybody told him that the look and

movement were absolutely real. In fact, they had told him this so often, in the first week or two, that he became suspicious and figured that his new eyes were totally out of control and spinning like pinwheels..He usually ate lunch alone in his office. The room was the size of an elevator, but of course didn't go up or down. It went sideways, however, in the sense that herein Paul was transported into wondrous lands of adventure..Zedd endorses self-pity, but only if you learn to use it as a springboard to anger, because anger-like hatred--can be a healthy emotion when properly channeled. Anger can motivate you to heights of achievement you otherwise would never know, even just the simple furious determination to prove wrong the bastards who mocked you, to rub their faces in the fact of your success. Anger and hatred have driven all great political leaders, from Hider to Stalin to Mao, who wrote their names indelibly across the face of history, and who were--each, in his own way--eaten with self-pity when young..Yet in her heart, she wouldn't relinquish hope for a miracle. This was an amazing boy, a prodigy, a boy who could walk where the rain wasn't, already himself a miracle, and it seemed that anything might happen, that Dr. Chan might suddenly rush into the waiting room, surgical mask dangling from his neck, face aglow, with news of a spontaneous rejection of the cancer.. "I can't sleep half the time," Deed said, twisting the baseball cap in his hands. "I've lost weight, and I'm so nervous, jumpy."..PAUL DAMASCUS WAS walking the northern coast of California: Point Reyes Station to Tomales, to Bodega Bay, on to Stewarts Point, Gualala, and Mendocino. Some days he put in as little as ten miles, and other days he traveled more than thirty..When he noticed a blonde staring at him from a nearby booth, he smiled and winked at her. Although she was not attractive enough to meet his standards, there was no reason to be impolite..On mechanic, he again glanced meaningfully at Edom, who felt a response was expected. When he opened his mouth, he could think of nothing to say, except that at Sanriku, Japan, on June 15, 1896, a 110 foot-high wave, triggered by an undersea quake, killed 27,100 people, most while they were in prayer at a Shinto festival. Even to Edom, this seemed to be an inappropriate comment, so he said nothing. .Their story would be that Cain's gun had jammed just as Tom had entered Barty's bedroom. Too cowardly for hand-to-hand combat, the Shamefaced Slayer had fled through the open window. He was loose once more in an unsuspecting world..Suddenly, even in the heart of a great city, the alleyway seemed as lonely as an English moor, and not a smart place to seek asylum from a vengeful spirit. Casting aside all pretense of self-control, Junior sprinted for the next street, where the sight of multitudes, swarming in winter sunshine, filled him not with paranoia or even uneasiness, anymore, but with an unprecedented feeling of brotherhood..surreptitiously with Junior. He was accustomed to being an object of desire. This night, however, the only lady he cared about was San Francisco herself, and he wanted to be alone with her..Then from San Francisco International, through the fog-shrouded streets of the night city, to St. Mary's, to Room 724. And to the discovery that Phimie's blood pressure was so high-210 over 126-that she was in a hypertensive crisis, at risk of a stroke, renal failure, and other life-threatening complications.. "If I ever have trots, you'll know." And then in the Cheese voice: "CAN WE LISTEN TO THE BOOK TALK IN YOUR ROOM?"".During the girl's final appointment, Junior discovered she would be home alone that same night, her parents at a function she wasn't required to attend. She appeared to reveal this inadvertently, quite innocently; however, Junior was a bloodhound when it came to smelling seduction, regardless of how subtle the scent..When he woke in- the morning, he raised his head from the pillow to look at the alarm clock-and saw the twenty-five cents on his nightstand. Two dimes and a nickel..In fact, although weak and achy, Junior felt mentally refreshed and wonderfully alert..Using a three-step folding stool, he was able to get near enough to one of the vent plates in the living room to determine whether it might be the source of the song. just then the singing stopped..In a magazine article about the hero, passing mention was made of a restaurant where occasionally the great man ate breakfast..Initially, the Pacific could not be seen beyond an opaque lens of fog, Yet later, when the mist retreated, the sea itself became a portent of sightlessness: Spread flat and colorless in the morning light, the glassy water reminded her of the depthless eyes of the blind, of that terrible sad vacancy where vision is denied..He sprang to his feet, or maybe only staggered up, depending on whether his image of himself right now was pulp or real, and surveyed the scene, looking for the bandaged man. A few neighbors crossed the lawn toward Grace, and others approached along the street. But the killer was gone..Inevitably, he had to wonder if Naomi had kept her pregnancy secret because, indeed, she suspected that the child wasn't her husband's..The shriek of the sirens groaned into silence. The police must have pulled to the curb in the street..Whether the cop was unhinged or not, Junior had nothing to gain by talking to him, especially in this disorienting darkness. He was exhausted, achy, with a sore throat, and he couldn't trust himself to be as..At the end of their second date, however, Frieda invited Junior up to her apartment, to see her Lientery collection and, no doubt, to take a ride on the Cain ecstasy machine. She owned seven canvases by the painter, received as partial payment of his PR bills..Edom, eager to learn precisely when a tidal wave or falling asteroid would bring his doom, fetched a pack of cards from a cabinet in the parlor. When Maria explained that only every third card was read and that a full look at the future required four decks, Edom returned to the parlor to scare up three more..She left him sore in places that had never been sore before. Yet he was more stressed out on Thursday than he'd been on Wednesday..From the far end of the table, Agnes said, "For starters, Tom, we all want to hear about the rhinoceros and the other you."..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.. "Evidence suggests Vanadium killed a woman here, a nurse at the hospital. Lover's quarrel, perhaps. He set her house on fire with her body in it, to cover his tracks, but he must have realized they would still finger him, so he lit out."..Not that she ever gave any indication that her brothers were other than a source of pride for her. She treated them always with respect,

tenderness, and love-as if unaware of their shortcomings..In this brighter light, he further examined the gallery brochure and discovered Celestina's photograph. She and her sister were not as alike as twins, but the resemblance was striking..Yes, she did, she had one, but not much of one, and compared to the McIntosh in Google's throat, this was just a bitty crab apple, easy to overlook, not excessive for a woman..The blonde was coming on to him, just as a score of other women had done since his arrival, so Junior tried to balance seduction with information gathering. Putting his hand over the hand with which she was gently massaging his thigh, he said, "I knew her brother in Nam. Then I got wounded, shipped out, lost touch. Like to find him." Every time Junior glanced back, Vanadium was following his wake through the throng. Stocky but almost gliding. Grim and grimmer. Hideous. And closer..Leaving the engine running and the heater on, he got out of the car, leaned back inside, said, "Better lock up while I'm gone," and then closed his door..Celestina screamed-"Here! In here!"--as she slapped the magazine into the butt of the pistol..Curious to know what Neddy had said, Junior quickly approached the same gallery staffer. "Excuse me, but I've been looking for my friend ever so long in this mob, and then I saw him talking to you-the gentleman in the London Fog and the tux-and now I've lost him again. He didn't say if he was leaving, did he? He's my ride home." He had time to think of quite a few, because he drove five miles per hour below the posted speed limit. He couldn't risk being stopped for a traffic violation when Thomas Vanadium, the human stump, was dead and bundled in the back..Intending to keep the front of the gallery under surveillance from behind the wheel of his Mercedes, Junior checked the time as he walked toward the car. His wrist was bare, his Rolex missing..Embarrassed, Kathleen stopped singing, but to the other woman, Nolly said, "It is a lovely voice, isn't it? Haunting, I think." "He knew how you felt about having too much life insurance. So he didn't disclose it to you." "Wouldn't dream of asking you to make it a habit. Just this one time. If anguish, why not guilt?" "Longer to wait between Christmases," she said. "And between birthdays. I'd save a bunch of money on gifts." "There's nothing here for you," she said, stepping back from the door in order to close it..She slammed it shut before he could stop her, whether he had intended to stop her or not, and she engaged the deadbolt lock.

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