

## DIMENSIONEN DER WIRKLICHKEIT TEIL 3

When Agnes woke at 1:50 A.M., she was in the grip of a vague apprehension for which she couldn't identify a source..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.."I don't just think so. And I don't just know it. I feel it, exactly like you feel all the ways things are. I'll bet you feel it, too."..Stepping forward, Agnes said, "When Barty holds my hand and walks me through the rain, I get wet even while he stays dry. The same for all the rest of us here ... except Angel.".."What's below us?" Hound pointed to the floor, paved with rough slate flags..Furrowing her brow and narrowing her eyes as though prepared to scold him, she slowly lowered her face to his, until their noses were touching, and she whispered, "Because it's more fun if it's secret."..Relieved but still wary, he toured the small house again to be sure doors and windows were locked..Behind her, he said, "And is that my gray cardigan? What did you do to my cardigan?"..Agnes had the craziest notion that he was counting them, when at is age, Of course, he would have no concept of numbers.."Please try not to be alarmed, Miss White, but I have a patrol car on the way to your address."..The three of them, gathered around her in the quick, held fast to her, as if Death couldn't take what they refused to release..Grace, of course, was a strong woman for whom faith was an armor against far worse than embarrassment. Celestina knew that Mom would suffer immeasurably more heartache by remaining in Oregon than what pain she might experience at her daughter's side, but Phimie was too young, too naive, and too frightened to grasp that in this matter, as in all others, her mother was a pillar, not a reed.."Science. Quantum mechanics. Which is a theory ... of physics. But by theory, I don't mean just wild speculation. Quantum mechanics works. It underlies the invention of television. Before the end of this century, perhaps even by the '80s, quantum-based technology will give us powerful and cheap computers in our homes, computers as small as briefcases, as small as a wallet, a wristwatch, that can do more and far faster data processing than any of the giant lumbering computers we know today. Computers as tiny as a postage stamp. We'll have wireless telephones you can carry anywhere. Eventually, it will be possible to construct single-molecule computers of enormous power, and then technology-in fact, all human society-will change almost beyond comprehension, and for the better.".."Simon's a funny duck," Vanadium said, "but I like him more than a little and trust him implicitly. He wanted to know what he could do to help. Initially, my speech was slurred, I had partial paralysis in my left arm, and I'd lost fifty-four pounds. I wasn't going to be looking for Cain for a long time, but it turned out Simon knew where he was."..Similarities between Naomi and her mom- ended with appearances. Sheena was loud, crass, self-absorbed, and had the vocabulary of a brothel owner specializing in service to sailors with Tourette's syndrome..could not be a person of the best intentions. Doctors and nurses wouldn't monitor their patients with the lights off..The bullet had been fired by a renegade cop who was every bit as lousy a marksman as he was a corrupt scumball. He'd been aiming for Nolly's crotch..Celestina was hardly more than a child herself, pretending to have the strong shoulders and the breadth of experience to bear this burden. She felt half crushed.Into her fevered mind came an image of a milk-glass infant, as translucent as Joey at the back door of the ambulance. Fearing that this vision meant her child would be stillborn, she said, My baby, but no sound escaped her..Snapping the cylinder into place, he rose to his feet. Already he had a new plan, and the cop's revolver was the most important tool that he required to implement it..The second ring was followed by a click, and then a familiar droning voice said, "Hello. I'm Thomas Vanadium-".He kept the house, for it was a shrine to his life with Perri. He returned to it from time to time, to refresh his spirit..He needed to keep moving, conduct the search, find the watch, and get the hell out of here, but he couldn't stop staring at the musician. Something about the cadaver made him nervous-aside from the fact that it was dead and disgusting and, if he was caught with it, a one-way ticket to the gas chamber..The muscles of his legs grew as hard as any of the landscapes that he trod. Granite thighs; calves like marble, roped with veins..Laying the gun on the newspaper, he dropped into the chair. He picked up his coffee. The search of the house had been conducted with such urgency that the java was still pleasantly hot..He might not have this future-living thing down perfectly, but he was absolutely terrific at anger..Agnes pulled the stack of cards in front of her. She discarded the first two, as Maria would have done, and turned over the third..Arriving home, he hesitated to open the door. He expected to find Vanadium inside..Awed, dropping to one knee before Barty, Tom fingered the sleeve of the boy's shirt.."You know where it comes from," her mother said with a yawn that betrayed her exhaustion after a night with no sleep and too much drama..Her mother and father still resided in a world where Phimie was alive. Bringing them from that old reality to this new one would be the second-hardest thing Celestina had ever done..He might have felt properly foolish if he had not suffered so much personal experience of Enoch Cain. This was a false alarm, but considering the nature of the enemy, it wasn't a bad idea to put himself through a drill from time to time..Grinning but with an odd edge of concern in his expression that Celestina could see even through her tears, Wally said, "Does that mean you ... you will?"..Junior attended a New Year's Eve party with a nuclear-holocaust theme. Festivities were held in a mansion usually hung with cutting-edge art, but all the paintings had been replaced with poster-size blowups of photos of ruined Nagasaki and Hiroshima..As outgoing as his twin uncles were introverted, Barty didn't withdraw from the festivities. Agnes never needed to remind him that family and guests took precedence over even the most fascinating characters in fiction, and the boy's delight in the company of others pleased his mother and made her proud..She wouldn't answer him, but he was as convinced by her silence as he would have been by a blurted confession--or by a denial, for that matter. Her wild eyes convinced him, too, and her trembling mouth. Naomi had

come back to be with him, and it could be argued that Seraphim had returned in a sense, too, for this girl was the flesh of Seraphim's flesh, born out of her death..Kaitlin had the piercing voice and talent for vituperation that marked her as a member of the Hackachak tribe, but for now she was content to leave the vocal assault to her parents. The stare with which she drilled Junior, however, if brought to bear on a promising geological formation, would core the earth and strike oil in minutes..With a thin hiss of disgust, Junior pulled away from the thing, whatever it was, withdrew the flashlight from his belt, and listened intently for sounds in the alleyway. No voices. No footsteps. Only distant traffic noises so muffled that they sounded like the grunts and groans and low menacing growls of foraging animals, displaced predators prowling the urban mist..If someone were here in the hallway with him, it couldn't be Angel, because she would be chattering enthusiastically in one voice or another. Uncle Jacob would never tease him like this, and no one else was in the house..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."And even in her dreams, you're determined to be there for her. There was a boogeyman, I have no doubt you would kick his hairy ass, and he wouldn't come around again, ever. So you just go in this gallery..This ended any hope of romance, and he was disappointed. A less self-controlled man might have seized a nearby bronze vase-fashioned to resemble dinosaur stool-and stuffed her into it or vice versa..In his car, currently a Mercedes, he made three trips between his apartment and the garage in which he'd stored the Ford van under the Pinchbeck name. He took precautions against being followed..Fortunately, just as he was about to declare his gut feelings to his superior and risk dismissal, he saw his potential patient. At fifteen, Seraphim was breathtakingly beautiful, in her own way as striking as Naomi, and instinct told Junior that the chance of being physically or morally polluted by her was negligible..Better still, he was able to have the girl to the accompaniment of her father's voice, which was even kinkier than doing her in the parsonage. When Junior rang the bell, Seraphim had been in her room, listening to a tape of a sermon her father was composing. The good reverend usually dictated a first draft, which his daughter then transcribed. For three hours, Junior went at her mercilessly, to the rhythms of her father's voice. The reverend's "presence" was deliciously perverse and stimulating to his sense of erotic invention. When Junior was finished, there was nothing sexual that Seraphim could ever do with a man that she had not learned from him..Maria Elena Gonzalez--such an imposing figure in spite of her diminutive stature that even three names seemed insufficient to identify her--was still present. Although the crisis had passed, she wasn't ready to trust that nurses and doctors, by themselves, could provide Agnes with adequate care..She could have gone at him with the chair once more, but it was falling apart. Instead, she abandoned furniture for the promise of a firearm, dropped to her knees, and snatched the discarded pistol magazine off the floor..Such behavior as hers was unlikely to lead to self-discovery, self improvement, and fulfillment. We make our own misery in this life. For better or worse, we create our own futures..OF THE SEVEN NEWBORNS, none was fussing, too fresh to the world to realize how much was here to fear..By lunch, he had turned the final page, and he was so full of the tale that he seemed to have no room for food. While his mother kept reminding him to eat, he regaled her with the details of John Thomas Stuart's great adventures with Lummo, as though every word that Heinlein had written were not science fiction, but truth.."Yes, Barty," Tom said. "I feel a depth to life, layers beyond layers. Sometimes it's ... scary. Mostly it inspires me. I can't see these other worlds, can't move between them. But with this quarter, I can prove that what I feel isn't my imagination." He extracted a quarter from a jacket pocket, holding it between thumb and forefinger for all but Barty to see. "Angel?".The slur faded from his voice in minutes, but he suspected that straining too long to sustain this borrowed vision could result in a stroke or worse..Junior wasn't interested in Vietnam anymore, and he wasn't in the least troubled by the other news. These two years were disturbing to him only because of Thomas Vanadium.."Your father denies the rape ever occurred, apparently out of what I'd call a misguided willingness to trust in divine justice..".The longer he crouched, head cocked, breathing silently through his open mouth, the more convinced Junior became that he had heard a man approaching. Indeed, the terrible conviction grew that someone was standing immediately in front of the dumpster, head cocked, also breathing through his open mouth, listening for Junior even as Junior listened for him..Almost thirty years from the seminary--even farther from it if measured by degrees of lost innocence, by miles of rough experience Tom Vanadium set out to kill a man. Given the chance to disarm Cain, given the opportunity to merely wound him, he would nevertheless go for the head shot or the heart shot, play jury and executioner, play God, and leave to God the judgment of his stained soul..Knacker or Hisscus, or Nork, was talking about an offering, as though Naomi were a goddess to whom they wished to present a penance of gold and jewels..The morning that it happened, Tom Vanadium rose later than usual, shaved, showered, and then used the telephone in Paul's downstairs study to call Max Bellini in San Francisco and to speak, as well, with authorities in both the Oregon State Police and the Spruce Hills Police Department..On the High Marsh.A sudden cold breeze blew down out of the moon, bearing a faint alien scent, and the black boughs of the trees billowed and rustled like witches' skirts..From the bathroom, Junior gathered an electric razor and toiletries. He added these to the suitcases..Her elegance was appealing. A pink Chanel suit with knee-length skirt, a strand of pearls. Her figure was spectacular, but she didn't flaunt it. She was even wearing a bra. In this age of bold erotic fashion, her more demure style was enormously seductive..Sitting on the edge of the bed, Maria lightly salted the runny eggs and spooned them into Agnes's mouth. "Eggs is as chickens does..".In January 1965, Magusson had sent Cain to Nolly as a client, not sure why the creep needed a private detective. That had turned out to be the business about Seraphim White's baby. Simon's warning to be careful of Enoch Cain

had helped to shape Nolly's decision to withhold the information about the child's placement..Recalling how the title of the exhibition had resonated with him when first he'd seen the gallery, brochure, Junior felt certain now that a tape-recorded early draft of this sermon was the kinky "music" that accompanied his evening of passion with Seraphim. He couldn't remember one word of it, let alone any element that would have deeply moved a national radio audience, but this didn't mean that he was shallow or incapable of being touched by philosophical speculations. He'd been so distracted by the erotic perfection of Seraphim's young body and so busy jumping her that he wouldn't have remembered a word, either, if Zedd himself had been sitting on the bed, discussing the human condition with his customary brilliance..Mrs. Cain's little boy felt small, weak, sorry for himself, and terribly alone. The detective was still here, but his presence only aggravated Junior's sense of isolation.."Agnes," said the magician, "you better start meeting with that librarian now to record your own life. If you don't get started for another forty years, by then you'll need a whole decade of talking to get it all down."..As Junior was about to knock again, the door flew inward, and over Sinatra having fun with "When My Sugar Walks Down the Street," Victoria said, "You're early, I didn't hear your car--" She was speaking as she pulled the door open, and she cut herself off in midsentence When she stepped up to the threshold and saw who stood before her.."But before you leave St. Mary's," the physician said, "I'd like a few mutes of your time. It's very important to me. Personally."..She looked surprised, all right, but her expression wasn't the one that Junior had painted on the canvas of his imagination. Her surprise had no delight in it, and she didn't at once break into a radiant smile..Angel, however, focused on a point in the air above the table. Faint furrows marked her brow for a moment, but then the frown gave way to a smile..The sill was about four and a half feet off the lavatory floor. With both hands, Junior levered himself onto it..The wine tasted bitter, but Celestina knew that it was sweet. The bitterness was in her, not in the legacy of the grape.."It's what?" asked the detective, for with the exception of his teeth, he was not a self-improved individual..With every step through the long night walk, Paul had considered what he would say, must say, if this encounter ever took place. Now all his practiced words deserted him..The bandaged man stormed up from the ruin of the living room, gauze fluttering around his lips as his hard exhalations seemed to prove that he wasn't a long-dead pharaoh reanimated to punish some heedless archaeologist who had ignored all warnings and violated his tomb. So this wasn't a Weird Tales moment..His conscience as a craftsman would not let him fault the carpentry of the ship in any way; but his conscience as a wizard told him he could put a hex on her, a curse woven right into her beams and hull. Surely that was using the secret art to a good end? For harm, yes, but only to harm the harmful. He did not talk to his teachers about it. If he was doing wrong, it was none of their fault and they would know nothing about it. He thought about it for a long time, working out how to do it, making the spell very carefully. It was the reversal of a finding charm: a losing charm, he called it to himself. The ship would float, and handle well, and steer, but she would never steer quite true..She must have sensed his assessment of her and realized that she had little chance of charming him, for she turned at once away and never looked in his direction again..He thought he heard the tick-scrape-rattle-clink of Industrial Woman on the prowl. In the living room. Now the hall. Approaching..Cops at the doorstep, the lunatic bitch with the chair, the clergyman's curse-all this amounted to more than even a committed man could handle. Get out of the present, go for the future..On this morning in March, minutes after the pie caravan had departed, Edom got his Ford Country Squire out of the garage and drove to the nursery, which opened early. Spring was drawing near, and much work needed to be done to make the most of the rosarium that Joey Lampion had encouraged him to restore. He happily contemplated hours of browsing through plant stock, tools, and gardening supplies..1969 through 1973: the Year of the Rooster, chased by the Year of the Dog, followed fast by the Pig, faster by the Rat, with the Ox passing in a stampede pace. Eisenhower dead. Armstrong, Collins, Aldrin on the moon: one giant step on soil untouched by war. Hot pants, plane hijackings, psychedelic art. Sharon Tate and friends murdered by Manson's girls seven days before Woodstock, the Age of Aquarius stillborn, but the death unrecognized for years. McCartney split, Beatles dissolved. Earthquake in Los Angeles, Truman dead, Vietnam sliding into chaos, riots in Ireland, a new war in the Middle East, Watergate..After prying Junior out of the meditative position, Chicane pushed him onto his back and vigorously--indeed, violently--massaged his thighs and calves. "Really bad muscle spasms," he explained..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.."Oh, it certainly is! It certainly is enough! But ... I don't regret much, you know. But I do regret not being here to see why you and Angel have been brought together. I know it'll be something lovely, Barty. Something so fine."..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..Another of Junior's self-improvement projects, since moving to California, was to become a knowledgeable gourmet, also a connoisseur of fine wines. San Francisco was the perfect university for this education, because it offered innumerable world-class restaurants in every imaginable ethnic variety..Drawn by voices on the second floor, Tom took the stairs two at a time. A man and a boy. Barty and Cain. To the left in the hallway, and then to a room on the right..As to the distressing matter of Seraphim's daughter, Junior at first decided to return to San Francisco to torture the truth out of Nolly Wulfstan. Then he realized that he'd been referred to Wulfstan by the same man who had told him that Thomas Vanadium was missing and was believed to be Victoria Bressler's killer..Evidently, the hero was accustomed to encounters of this nature. He rose, pulled out the unused fourth chair. "Please sit with us."..He was a man with a plan, focused, committed, ready to act and then think, as soon as he was able to act. A spasm of pain weakened his hand. Cartridges slipped through his fingers, fell to the floor..Because, since childhood, Jacob had been drawn to stories and images of doom, to catastrophe on both the personal and the planetary scale--from theater fires to all-out nuclear war--he had a flamboyant imagination second to none and a colorful if peculiar intellectual life.

For him, therefore, the most difficult part of learning card manipulation had been coping with the tedium of practice, but for years he had applied himself diligently, motivated by his love and admiration for his sister, Agnes..She was of two minds about this. She wanted him, wanted to be held and cherished, to satisfy him and to be satisfied. But she was the daughter of a minister: The concept of sin and consequences was perhaps less deeply ingrained in some daughters of bankers or bakers than in a child of a Baptist clergyman. She was an anachronism in this age of easy sex, a virgin by choice, not by lack of opportunity. Although she'd recently read a magazine article containing the claim that even in this era of free love, forty-nine percent of brides were virgins on their wedding day, she didn't believe it and assumed that she'd chanced upon a publication that had fallen through a reality warp between this world and a more prudish one parallel to it. She was no prude, but she wasn't a spendthrift, either, and her honor was a treasure that shouldn't be thoughtlessly thrown away. Honor! She sounded like a maid of old, pining in a castle tower, waiting for her Sir Lancelot. I'm not just a virgin, I'm a freak! But even putting the idea of sin aside for a moment, assuming that maidenly honor was as pass? as bustles, she still preferred to wait, to savor the thought of intimacy, to allow expectation to build, and to start their conjugal life together with no slightest possibility of regret. Nevertheless, she had decided that if he was ready for the commitment that she believed he'd already teetered on the edge of expressing three times, then she would set aside all misgivings in the name of love and would lie down with him, and hold him, and give of herself with all her heart..Paul said, "I wanted you ... I don't know ... I just wanted you to see her. I wanted to say ... to say. . .".Agnes added this stop to her route at the request of Reverend Tom Collins, the local Baptist minister whose folks unthinkingly gave him the name of a cocktail. She was friendly with all the clergymen in Bright Beach, and her pie deliveries favored no one creed..Now that efforts were being made to control the preeclampsia, Dr. Daines had scheduled a series of tests for the following day. He expected to recommend a cesarean section as soon as Phimie's e's blood pressure was reduced and stabilized, but he didn't want to risk this surgery before determining what complications might have resulted from her restricted diet and the compression of her abdomen.."Well, actually, I owe Phimie. It's what she said between her two deaths on the delivery table that's changed my life."I got Starkweather, killing all those people with no hope of personal gain. You got maniac cops and this new war in Vietnam..From the corn soup to the baked ham to the plum pudding, he did not speak of his dry walk in wet weather.."Apple juice, lime Jell-O, and four soda crackers," said the detective. "If you don't have enough of a conscience to make you confess,.Chase after her on foot. Shoot her in the car. Maybe. He'd have five rounds left if he used one on the man, four on Bartholomew..Junior raised his voice even further: "In those old movies, the Little Rascals."."That's kind of you," Panglo stammered, "but I have little time for reading, very little time." Adding new growth to his forest of frustration, Tom got up from the study desk, fetched the newspaper from the front doorstep, and went to the kitchen to make his morning coffee. He boiled up a pot of strong brew and sat down at the knotty-pine table with a steaming mug full of black and sugarless solace.."I wouldn't just whack anyone, not even a worm bucket like Cain, any more than I would commit suicide. Remember, I believe in eternal consequences."Being uniquely sensitive, he had mourned Naomi with his entire body, with violent emesis and pharyngeal bleeding and incontinence. His grief had been so racking that it might have killed him. Enough was enough..He remembered the collection of Caesar Zedd self-help drivel that had occupied a place of honor in the wife killer's former home in Spruce Hills. Cain owned a hardcover and a paperback of each of Zedd's works. The more expensive editions had been pristine, as though they were handled only with gloves; but the text in the paperbacks had been heavily underlined, and the corners of numerous pages had been bent to mark favorite passages..The nurse was in was gone, but Maria remained in attendance. She the vinyl-and-stainless-steel armchair, busy at..Junior said nothing. He was still upset with Naomi for hiding the pregnancy from him, but he was delighted that the baby would have been his. Now Vanadium couldn't claim that Naomi's infidelity and the resultant bastard had been the motive for murder..Tom Vanadium rose to his feet and, with one hand on Barty's shoulder, he surveyed the faces of those gathered on the porch. Most of these people were such new acquaintances that they were all but strangers to him. Nevertheless, for the first time since his early days in St. Anselmo's Orphanage, he'd found a place where he belonged. This felt like home..In the present, long after the execution of Josef Krepp, half a block ahead, lay the Lipscomb house. Beyond it, the Lampion place.."You didn't at all," Dr. Salk assured him. "I need to talk to you. If you would give me a little of your time..."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..She stepped to the bed, bracketing Junior between her and Big Rude. The stream of obscene invective issuing from Sheena made Junior feel as if he had gotten in the way of a septic-tank cleanout hose..Then he looked up at the massive limbs overhead, and the mood changed: A sense of impending insight at once gave way to the fear that an unsuspected fissure in a huge limb might crack through at this precise moment, crushing him under a ton of wood, or that the Big One, striking now, would topple the entire oak..STILL WEARING HIS white pharmacy smock over a white shirt and black slacks, striding purposefully along the streets of Bright Beach, under a malignant-gray twilight sky worthy of a Weird Tales cover, with ominous accompanying rhythm provided by wind-clattered palm fronds overhead, Paul Damascus headed home for the day..When Victoria finally calmed her racing heart, she returned the spoon to the tray on the nightstand, stoppered the carafe, and said, "That's enough for now, Mr. Cain. In your condition, even too much I melted ice might trigger renewed vomiting."From the public hallway on the ground level, stairs led to the upper three floors. He would be able to hear anyone descending long before they arrived..For the first time since walking to La Jolla to meet Jonas Salk, Paul planned a journey with a specific

purpose..In the morning, at breakfast, from this calmer perspective, he looked back at his tantrum in the middle of the night and wondered if he might be in psychological trouble. He decided not. In November and December, Junior studied arcane texts on the supernatural, went through new women at a pace prodigious even for him, found three Bartholomews, and finished ten needlepoint pillows..Thus began the first day of the last weekend of their old lives. Maria visited on Saturday, sitting in the kitchen, embroidering the collar and cuffs of a blouse, while Agnes baked pies..After mentally reviewing what he must say, after working up a nervous edge, he dialed the SFPD emergency number..He clenched the steering wheel tightly with both hands, clenched his teeth so fiercely that his jaw muscles bulged and twitched, and clenched his mind around a stubborn determination to get control of himself. Slow deep breaths. Positive thoughts..After the paralytic bladder seizures had passed and Junior had drained Lake Mead, Chicane recommended plenty of caffeine and sugar to guard against an unlikely but not impossible spontaneous return to a trance state. "Anyway, after pumping alpha waves for as long as you just did, you shouldn't actually need to sleep anytime soon."."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."."Nolly shrugged. "He can't know for sure. And anyway, he didn't get the pushed idea until he'd already taken the case."."Mary was at play here, and the sight of her, his first in seven years, almost brought Barty to his knees. She was the image of her mother, and he knew that this must be at least a little bit what Angel had looked like when, at three, she had initially arrived here in 1968, when she explored the kitchen on that first day and found the toaster under a sock..Risking all, he turned his back on her and fled, and in spite of his expectations to the contrary, she allowed him to escape..In spite of the bravado of the responses in Junior's unspoken half of the conversation, he was increasingly unnerved by Vanadium. The cop was a lunatic, all right, but he was something more than a mere nut case..Prepared for any contingency, Junior listened to the house until he was certain that he needed the knife for no one else..So many stops, too little time at each, a dazzle of Christmas trees decorated every one to a different taste, offers of butter cookies and hot chocolate or lemon crisps and eggnog, morning chats in bright kitchens steeped in wonderful cooking odors and-in the chillier afternoon good wishes exchanged in front of hearth fires, gifts accepted as well as given, cookies taken in trade for pecan cakes, "Silver Bells" and "Hark How the Bells" and "Jingle-Bell Rock" on the radio: Therewith they arrived at three o'clock in the afternoon, Christmas Eve, their deliveries completed before Santa's had begun..He fished the sound-suppressor from a jacket pocket, drew the pistol from his shoulder holster, and began to screw the former to the latter. He misthreaded it at first because his hands had begun to shake.."Why? What was he going to get out of it?"."To have the best chance of becoming a master mechanic, any young apprentice needs a mentor. The art of total card control cannot be learned entirely from books and experimentation.

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