

THE HOMES OF THE GREAT - VOLUME 12 LITTLE JOURNEYS TO THE HOMES OF

Little Journeys To The Homes Of The Great - Volume 12 Little Journeys To The Homes Of Great

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It wasn't a grand residence--a typical Main Street, USA, house-but it was more splendid to Paul than Paris, London, and Rome combined, cities that he would never see and would never regret failing to see..He was simplifying and combining concepts, but he knew no other way to quickly give them a feel for the wonder, the enigma, the sheer spookiness of the world revealed by quantum mechanics.."Do you want me to call and confirm how Vanadium was harassing you up here?" asked Magusson..Junior shuddered. Vanadium hadn't invented the name. It had genuine if inexplicable resonance with Junior that had nothing to do with the detective.."Toes," he repeated immediately in his sweet, piping voice. This was a new word for him..That was all right, for she had done the same for Otter's elder sister, and so his parents sent him to her in the evenings. But she taught Otter more than the song of the Creation. She knew his gift. She and some men and women like her, people of no fame and some of questionable reputation, had all in some degree that gift; and they shared, in secret, what lore and craft they had. "A gift untaught is a ship unguided," they said to Otter, and they taught him all they knew. It wasn't much, but there were some beginnings of the great arts in it; and though he felt uneasy at deceiving his parents, he couldn't resist this knowledge, and the kindness and praise of his poor teachers. "It will do you no harm if you never use it for harm," they told him, and that was easy for him to promise them.."Who?" she shouted, though they were perched side by side on a black-leather love seat..Gradually he grew calm. His great frosty exhalations diminished to a diaphanous dribble that evaporated two inches from his lips..To her mother, Celestina said, "What did you mean when you said you'd heard all about Barty here?". "Look at it this way, Aggie. All the pies, all the things you do-that's betting on life. And now you've just been given the great blessing of being able to place larger bets."..AFTER UNDERGOING TESTS for brain tumors or lesions, to ascertain whether his seizure of violent emesis might, in fact, have a physical cause, Junior was returned to his hospital room shortly before noon..The following April, when he proposed to her, she wouldn't have him. "You're sweet, Paul, but I can't let you throw your life away on me. You're this ... this beautiful ship that will sail a long way, to fascinating places, and I'd only be your anchor."..The infant Bartholomew was here in San Francisco. He must be found. He must be dispatched. By the time Junior devised a plan of action to locate the child, he was so hot with anger that he was sweating, and he stripped off one of his two pairs of briefs..Two high-quality deadbolt locks. Sufficient protection against the average intruder, but inadequate to keep out a self-improved man with channeled anger..The end of his quest was near, so near, the right Bartholomew almost within 'mullet range. He was furious with Neddy Gnathic for possibly screwing this up..He slept outdoors rarely and otherwise stayed in inexpensive motels, boardinghouses, and YMCAs..She always had a generous heart. After disease whittled Perri's flesh, leaving her so frail, her great heart, undiminished by her suffering, seemed bigger than the body that contained it..She strove to appear calm, and she must have succeeded, because neither woman seemed to realize that she was scared almost to the point of paralysis. She moved woodenly, joints stiff, muscles tense..Although she would have felt ridiculous phrasing this question in these words to any other three-year-old, no better way existed to ask it of her special son: "Kiddo ... do you realize you're speaking of your dad in the present tense?".Harrison was a Baptist, Vanadium a Catholic, and although they approached the same faith from different angles, they weren't coming to it from different planets, which was the feeling Vanadium had been left with following their conversation. It was true that Enoch Cain could never be brought successfully to trial for the rape of Phimie, subsequent to her death and in the absence of her testimony. And it was also uncomfortably true that exploring the possibility that Cain was the rapist would tear open the wounds in the hearts of everyone in the White family, to no useful effect. Nevertheless, to rely on divine justice alone seemed naive, if not morally questionable..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..Nevertheless, Junior was thrilled to hear the name Bartholomew, and to know that the boy of whom Celestina spoke was the Bartholomew of Bartholomews, the menacing presence in his unremembered dream, the threat to his fortune and future that must be eliminated..He spat on his right thumb, scrubbed the thumb against one of the dried drips on the floor, rubbed thumb and forefinger together, and brought the freshened spoor to his nose. He smelled blood..In July 1967, at two and a half, he finally contracted his first cold, an off-season virus with a mean bite. His throat was sore, but he didn't fuss or even complain. He swallowed his medicine without resistance, and though he rested occasionally, he played with toys and paged through picture books with as much pleasure as ever.."Yeah, but I've been thinking about that. If he feels some kind of

responsibility ... then why did he ever represent Cain in the first place?". He paused, not sure how to proceed. He was not accustomed to writing letters to total strangers..She removed a temporary cap from the second bicuspid on the lower left side and replaced it with the porcelain cap that had been delivered by the lab that morning..Junior intended to pack only a single bag, leaving most of his clothes behind. He could afford a fine new wardrobe..Freed for the moment from the need to be strong for her sleeping Angel or for Wally, Celestina turned to Tom Vanadium, saw in his gray eyes both the sorrow of the world and a hope to match her own, saw in his ruined face the promise of triumph over evil, leaned against him for support, and finally dared to cry..Jolene started to refill his coffee mug-then thought better of it. "Maybe you don't need more caffeine, Edom." Friday, December 29, was a grand day: cool but not cold; high scattered clouds ornamenting a Wedgwood-blue sky. The streets were agreeably abustle but not swarming like the corridors of a hive, as sometimes they could be. San Franciscans, reliably a pleasant lot, were still in a holiday mood and, therefore, even quicker to smile and more courteous than usual..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.. "Too few," said Maria, "might mean you made an admirably small number of moral mistakes but also that you failed to take reasonable risks and didn't make full use of the gift of life." This was a California live oak, green even in winter, although its leaves were fewer now than they would be in warmer seasons. The elaborate branch structure, reflected around him, was an exquisite and harmonious maze overlaying a mosaic of sunlight green on grass, and something in its patterns suddenly touched him, moved him, seized his imagination. He felt as if he were balanced on the brink of an astonishing insight..His waitress was a cutie. She flirted with him, and he knew he could have her if he wanted..He slid his plate aside. From a pocket, he withdrew a quarter, which always served him as well with children as with murderers..Junior drove them a little crazy by pretending not to understand their intent as they circled the issue like novice snake handlers warily looking for a safe grip on a coiled cobra..In the front wall of the living room, where once had been a fine bay window, the parsonage lay open to the sunny day. Tom shrubbery, carried in from outside, marked the path of destruction. In the very middle of the room, plowed against a toppled sofa and a thick drift of broken furniture, a battered red Pontiac sagged to the left on broken springs and blown tires. A portion of the crazed windshield quivered and collapsed inward, while plumes of steam hissed from under the buckled hood..The Church nourished the soul, while the occult nourished the imagination. In Mexico, where physical comforts were often few and hope of a better life in this world was hard won, both the soul and the imagination must be fed if life was to be livable..She shivered, and Edom, thinking that she had caught a chill ripped off his suit jacket and draped it over her shoulders..To his surprise, when Naomi expressed an interest in romance, Junior was a bull again. He would have thought he had left his best stuff at Reverend Harrison White's parsonage..On the two-chair bed beside her mother, Angel issued small cries of distress in her sleep. Whatever presences flocked around her in the dream, they weren't baby chickens..The little hands, so weak now but someday strong: Would they eventually be capable of savagery, as were the father's hands? Misbegotten offspring. This seed of a demonic man whom Phimie herself had called sick and evil. However innocent-looking now, what pain might she eventually in-- on others? What outrages might she commit in years to come? Although Celestina searched intently, she could not glimpse the father's evil in the child..the beast would find them one day, but she hadn't spoken of that possibility in perhaps two and a half years..When the pianist eventually launched into "Someone to Watch over Me," he didn't appear to be responding to a request, considering that a few other numbers had been played since the most recent gratuity. The tune was, after all, in his nightly repertoire.. "All right," Agnes said, and as she voiced her acceptance, she was shivered by a sudden fear for which she couldn't at once identify a cause..A dry laugh escaped the detective, but it had none of the warmth of most people's laughter. "You're not bad, Enoch. You're just not as good as you think you are." The minister had finished. The service was over. No one came to Junior with condolences, because they would see him again shortly, at the Ford dealership buffet..First he tore two paper towels from a wall-mounted dispenser and held one in each hand, as makeshift gloves. He was determined to leave no fingerprints..Agnes's big brother by six years, Edom had lived in one of the two apartments above the large detached garage, behind the main house, since he was twenty-five, when he'd left the working world. He was now thirty-six..Animal instinct told Junior that the business with the quarter in the diner and now these quarters in his living room were related to his failure to find Bartholomew, Seraphim White's bastard child. He couldn't logically explain the connection; but as Zedd teaches, animal instinct is the only unalloyed truth we will ever know..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..This was not the same card he'd found at his bedside, under two dimes and a nickel, on the night following Naomi's funeral. He had torn that one and had thrown it away..In all the many ways things are, across the infinity of worlds and all Creation, Barty believed that no woman existed whose beauty exceeded hers or whose heart was better..And so Agnes went alone to her bedroom and there, as on so many nights, sought the solace of the rock who was also her lamp, of the lamp who was also her high fortress, of the fortress who was also her shepherd. She asked for mercy, and if mercy was not to be granted, she asked for the wisdom to understand the purpose of her sweet boy's suffering..Channeling his beautiful rage, Junior hefted the corpse onto the windowsill, and shoved it headfirst into the alley. The fog received it with what sounded almost like a swallowing noise..No. Not exactly then. Not at the sight of the coin or the detective. He had felt this way at Vanadium's mention of the name that he, Junior, had supposedly spoken in his nightmare..After a long time the door opened and several men came in. He could do nothing against them as they gagged him and bound his arms behind him. "Now you won't weave charms nor speak spells, young'un," said a broad, strong man with a furrowed face, "but you can nod your head well enough, right? They sent you here as a dowser. If you're a good dowser you'll feed well and sleep easy. Cinnabar, that's what you're to nod for. The King's wizard says it's still here somewhere about these old mines. And he wants it. So it's best for us that we find it. Now I'll walk you out. It's like I'm the water finder and you're my wand, see? You lead on. And if you want to go this way or that way you dip your head, so. And when you know there's ore underfoot, you stamp on the place, so. Now that's the bargain, right? And if you play fair I will." Beyond the windows, the winter night sifted sootily down through the twinkling city, as he sat in his living room with a glass of Dry Sack in one hand and the picture of Celestina White in the other..A SEVERE THIRST INDICATED to Agnes that she wasn't dead. There would be no thirst in paradise.. "When we pull away, people are waving across the street at the UPS truck, and the driver, he sees them, and he stands there, kind of confused, and then he waves back." Eventually, when he had gone through the entire directory, if he'd had no success, he would phone each red-checked listing and ask for Bartholomew. A few

hundred calls, no doubt. Some would involve long-distance charges, but he could afford the toll..When he noticed that twilight had come and gone, he realized also that he'd walked through Bright Beach, along Pacific Coast Highway, and south into the neighboring town. Perhaps ten miles..RED SKY IN THE morning, sailors take warning; red sky at night, sailors delight..He wasn't a marksman, anyway. He couldn't handle anything more than close-up work..One of the gifts of power is to know power. Wizard knows wizard, unless the concealment is very skillful. And the boy had no skills at all except in boat-building, of which he was a promising scholar by the age of twelve. About that time the midwife who had helped his mother at his birth came by and said to his parents, "Let Otter come to me in the evenings after work. He should learn the songs and be prepared for his naming day." Furthermore, fear of the unknown is a weakness also because it humbles us. Humility, Caesar Zedd declares, is strictly for losers. For the purpose of social and financial advancement, we must pretend to be humble-shuffle our feet and duck our heads and make self-deprecating remarks-because deceit is the currency of civilization. But if ever we wallow in genuine humility, we will be no different from the mass of humanity, which Zedd calls "a sentimental sludge in love with failure and the prospect of its own doom."..He was having difficulty focusing his attention on the problem at hand. Through his mind, odd and disconnected thoughts rolled like slow, greasy, eye-of-the-hurricane waves on an ominous sea..Agnes prepared a dinner to indulge him: hot dogs with cheese, potato chips. Root beer instead of milk..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."..When he closed his eyes, he saw a bowling pin, a leftover image from his with-seed days. In less than a minute, he was able to make the pin dematerialize, filling his mind with featureless, soundless, soothing, white nothingness..Speaking of bosoms, everywhere in the loft were braless girls in sweaters and miniskirts, braless girls in T-shirts and miniskirts, braless girls in silk-lined rawhide vests and jeans, braless girls in tie-dyed sash tops, with bared midriffs, and calypso pants. Lots of guys moved through the crowd, too, but Junior barely noticed them..against his face, thorns gouging his skin, piercing his lips. His father, oblivious of his own puncture wounds, trying to..Fragments of the broken wineglass crunched under his shoes as he crossed the small kitchen to the dinette. He opened the bottle of vodka and put it on the table in front of the dead woman..In addition to these scavengers, another presence was here, unseen but unfelt. The chill of this invisible entity pierced Junior to the marrow: the stubborn, vicious, psychotic, prickly-bur spirit of Thomas Vanadium, maniac cop, not satisfied to haunt the house in which he'd died, not ready yet to seek reincarnation, but instead pursuing his beleaguered suspect even after death, capering--to paraphrase Sklent like an invisible, filthy, scabby monkey here on this city street, in bright daylight."Possible complications include cerebral hemorrhage, pulmonary edema, kidney failure, necrosis of the liver, coma-to name a few."..In his apartment once more, enjoying a cognac and a handful of pistachios as Monday changed to Tuesday, he decided that he should make 'preparations for the possibility that he might one day leave incriminating evidence in spite of his precautions. He ought to convert a portion of his assets into easily portable and anonymous wealth, like gold coins and diamonds. Establishing two or three alternate identities, with documentation, also would be wise..Leaving the children under the tree, Tom returned to the house to phone the police.."What wound? Junior wanted to ask, but he recognized bait when he heard it, and he did not bite..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..As kids-living in a house that was run like a prison, stifled by the oppressive rule of a morose father who believed that any form of entertainment was an offense against God-they conducted secret card games as their primary act of rebellion. A deck of cards was small enough to hide quickly and to keep hidden successfully even during one of their father's painstakingly thorough room searches..He was so innocent. This sweet boy, this pure and stainless infant, couldn't possibly have an enemy in the world, and she could not imagine any son of hers earning enemies, not if she raised him well. This was just a silly card reading.."Thirsty," Agnes rasped. Her voice was Sahara sand abrading anienct stone, the dry whisper of a pharaoh's mummy talking to itself in a vaulted sealed for three thousand years..At those cutting-edge galleries where he attended receptions, no one got in without a printed invitation. And even with the authentic paper in hand, you might still be refused entry if you failed to pass the cool test. The criteria of cool were the same as at the current hottest dance clubs, and in fact the bouncers controlling the gate at the finest avant-garde galleries were those who worked the clubs.."I know you, kid. You can handle anything from here on, whether it's a sold-out show or it's not, whether you're going to be famous or just another nobody."..Celestina finally zipped shut the satchel. "You better watch out for the big bad wolf."..Of course, you've never seen anything like it, you worthless adolescent twit. You're not old enough to have seen squat, and even if you were older than your own grandfather, you wouldn't have seen anything like this, Dr Kildare, because this here is a true case of voodoo Baptist boils, and they don't come along often!.In her features, the girl entirely resembled her mother. She was nothing whatsoever like Junior. Only the light brown shade of her skin provided evidence that she hadn't been derived from Seraphim by parthenogenesis..At last: the humiliating backless gown, the precious drugs, even a pretty nurse who seemed to like him, and then oblivion..In the morning, after Agnes showered and dressed, when she went downstairs, she discovered Barty already at the kitchen table, eating a bowl of cereal while riveted to the book. Finished with breakfast, he returned to his room, reading as he went.

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