

## **GOSPELS RE TRANSCRIBED FROM THE SINAITIC PALIMPSEST WITH A TRANSLA**

Most likely, Reverend White's ramblings were as greasy with sentiment and oily with irrational optimism as were his daughter's paintings, so Junior was in no hurry to learn the name of the radio program or to write for a transcript of the sermon..Angel didn't join the grieving women, but sat on the floor in front of the television, switching back and forth between Gunsmoke and The Monkees. Too young to be genuinely involved in either show, nevertheless she occasionally made gunfire sounds when Marshal Dillon went into battle or invented her own lyrics to sing along with the Monkees..sport shirt just for no reason at all, because she thought he'd look nice in it?"..Heaven, and his words touched a tenderness in her, overlaying an arc of pain across the curve of her smile..O foolish writer. Now moves. Even in storytime, dreamtime, once-upon-a time, now isn't then..Sheena Hackachak, at forty-four, was more beautiful than any current movie star. She looked twenty years younger than her true age, and she so resembled her late daughter that Junior felt a rush of erotic nostalgia at the sight of her..Junior was at critical depth. The psychological pressure was at least five thousand pounds per square inch and growing by the second. Implosion imminent..The gas oven might blow up in his face, at last bringing him peace, but if it didn't, he would at least have cookies for Agnes..because even to cry in pain will invite more vicious discipline than the pummeling he's already endured. His father..Then quickly from Spruce Hills to Eugene by car, from Eugene to Orange County Airport by a chartered aircraft, from Orange County to Bright Beach in a stolen '68 Oldsmobile 4-4-2 Hurst, while the advantage of surprise remained with him. Carrying a newly acquired, silencer-fitted 9-mm pistol, spare magazines of ammunition, three sharp knives, a police lock-release gun, and one piece of steaming luggage, Junior had arrived late the previous evening..He stepped to the front door, which was framed by curtained side lights. He drew one of the curtains aside and peered out..Even without the dangling cigarette and without the cynical sneer, Nolly had an air of toughness worthy of Sam Spade, largely because the face that nature had given him was a splendid disguise for the sentimental sweetie who lived behind it. With his bull neck, with his strong hands, with his shirt-sleeves rolled up to expose his lovely hairy forearms, he made a properly intimidating impression: as if Humphrey Bogart, Sydney Greenstreet, and Peter Lorre had been put in a blender and then poured into one suit..He was no longer in his scrubs, but wore gray wool slacks and a blue cashmere sweater over a white shirt. Face somber, he looked less like an obstetrician engaged in the business of life than like a professor of philosophy forever pondering the inevitability of death..In a pew in Old St. Mary's Church, in Chinatown, Junior took delivery of the lock-release gun and the untraceable 9-mm pistol with the custom-machined silencer, as previously arranged. The church was deserted at ten o'clock in the morning. The shadowy interior and the menacing religious figures gave him the creeps..In his mind, Junior saw a quarter turning knuckle over knuckle, and he heard the maniac cop's droning voice: There's a fine George and Ira Gershwin song called "Someone to Watch over Me. " You ever hear it, Enoch? I'm that someone for you, although not, of course, in a romantic sense..Returning the newborn to the nun, Celestina asked for the use of a phone, and for privacy..being careful to place the point of impact precisely where the bottle had struck her..straddles him, driving big fists into his back, brutally into his sides. With high fences and hedgerows of Indian laurels..More good American music. The Supremes were Negroes, sure, but Junior was not a bigot. Indeed, he had once made passionate love to a Negro girl..Agnes rubbed noses with him again, kissed him, and rose from the edge of the bed..At the conclusion of the ceremony, he relinquished his secondhand sight. He would live in darkness until Easter of 1986, though every minute of the day was brightened by his wife..That every mortal semblance took..For Agnes and Barty, one stop remained, where some of the joy of Christmas would always be buried with the husband that she still missed every day and the father that he would never know..He doused the light and crouched motionless in the absolute darkness, leaning against a wall of the dumpster to steady himself, because his feet were planted in slippery layers of fog-dampened plastic trash bags.. "Many claimed Maharion's throne, but none could keep it, and the quarrels of the claimants divided all loyalties. No commonwealth was left and no justice, only the will of the wealthy. Men of noble houses, merchants, and pirates, any who could hire soldiers and wizards called himself a lord, claiming lands and cities as his property. The warlords made those they conquered slaves, and those they hired were in truth slaves, having only their masters to safeguard them from rival warlords seizing the lands, and sea-pirates raiding the ports, and bands and hordes of lawless, miserable men dispossessed of their living, driven by hunger to raid and rob."..Only a few theater goers attended the matinee. No one sat near, so Google and Junior openly swapped packages: a five-by-six manila envelope to Google, a nine-by-twelve to Junior..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."..Dinner was available in the lounge. Junior enjoyed a superb filet mignon with a split of fine Cabernet Sauvignon..Maybe the watch wouldn't be discovered with the corpse. Maybe it would settle into the trash and not be found until archaeologists dug out the landfill two thousand years from now..Junior had expected these singular creatures, and he needed them to be as monstrous as they had always been in the past. Nonetheless, he shrank back against his pillows in dismay when they exploded into the hospital room. Their faces were as fierce as those of painted cannibals coming off a fast. They gestured emphatically, spitting expletives along with tiny bits of lunch dislodged from their teeth by the force of their condemnations..So runs the water away..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..He didn't wonder about his sanity, either, as a less self-improved man might have done. No madman strives to enhance his vocabulary or to deepen his appreciation for culture.. "That discord sets up lots of other vibrations, some of which will return to you in ways you might expect-and some in ways you could never see coming. Of the things you couldn't have seen coming, I'm the worst." Returning from his tests, he'd gotten into bed without stripping off the thin, hospital-issue robe. He was still wearing it over his pajamas..Around the dinner table, the adults applauded, but the tougher audience squinted at the ceiling, toward which she believed the coin had arced, then at the table, where it ought to have fallen among the water glasses or in her creamed corn. At last she looked at Tom and said, "Not magic." To celebrate, upon leaving the gallery, he went to the coffee shop in the Fairmont Hotel, atop Nob Hill, determined to have a beer and a cheeseburger..As yet, he hadn't taken either an antiemetic or antihistamine to ward off vomiting and hives, because he wanted to medicate -against those conditions as shortly before the violence as was practical, to ensure maximum protection. He'd intended to dose himself only after he followed Celestina home from the gallery and could be reasonably certain that he had located the lair of Bartholomew.. "I guess so, but it's not that. I was thinking of something my little girl said." When the sound-suppressor was properly attached to the pistol, Junior Cain leaned closer to the girl, peered into her eyes, and whispered, "Naomi, are you in there?" Near the top of the stairs, Barty thought he heard voices in his bedroom. Soft and indistinct. When he stopped to listen, the voices fell silent, or maybe he only imagined them..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.. "A nose, now, is a useful thing, a salable thing," Hound went on. "Not that I'm looking for competition. But a finder can always find work, as they say...You ever been in a mine?" Such quiet filled the house that Agnes couldn't hear even the murmuring miseries of the past..This surprised him. Of course, Oregon was not the Deep South. It was a progressive state. Nevertheless, he was surprised. Oregon wasn't home to many Negroes, either, a handful compared to those in other states, and yet until now Junior supposed that they had their own cemeteries.. "Tom, a couple minutes ago," Agnes said, "Celestina mentioned your. . . 'certain awareness.' Which is what exactly?" break and conversation among the customers fell into a lull. When the bar phone rang, though it was muted, he heard it at his table.. "They're all the family I have," Junior said with what he hoped sounded like sorrow and long-suffering love.. They came to her, picked up the luggage that she had put down, and Edom said, "I'll drive." Elsewhere in the cemetery, about 150 yards away, another interment service-with a much larger group of mourners-had begun prior to this one for Naomi. Now it was over, and the people were dispersing to their cars..Tom believed that the girl had an intuitive understanding of the true complexity of the world, but she was only three, after all, and neither ready nor able to absorb the scientific theory that supported her intuition..Bartholomew's genius might have been intimidating, even off-putting, if he'd not been as much child as child genius. Likewise, he would have been wearisome if impressed by his own gifts..Grace declined food, but Tom ordered for her, anyway, selecting those things that by now he knew Celestina liked, guessing that the mother's taste had shaped the daughter's..When he returned to the kitchen to add ice and sherry to his glass,he looked up White, Celestina in the San Francisco phone directory. Her number was listed; her address was not..Caution discarded, Junior went inside, for the same reason that a dedicated opera aesthete might once a decade attend a country-music concert: to confirm the superiority of his taste and to be amused by what passed for music among the great unwashed. Some might call it slumming.. "That won't do it." "I suspect," Tom said, "that any job you set your mind to, you'd be as good as you are at teeth." When together in Agnes's company, Edom and Jacob were brothers, comfortable with each other. But together, just the two, no Agnes, they were more awkward than strangers, because strangers had no shared history to overcome..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..On the third of June, he found another useless Bartholomew, and on Saturday, the twenty-fifth, two deeply disturbing events occurred. He switched on his kitchen radio only to discover that "Paperback Writer," yet another Beatles song, had climbed to the top of the charts, and he received a call from a ea woman..Throughout this procedure, Barty appeared solemn and thoughtful. When he had squeezed the tenth toe, he stared at it, brow furrowed..Yet, with no recollection of rising from his chair, he found that he had shouldered his backpack and crossed the room. The three men looked up expectantly..Rising, Celestina said to Tom, "Last Tuesday night, we had to switch on the lawn sprinklers. This will be much better." The boy dashed for the front passenger's door. Agnes didn't follow him, because she knew that he would politely but pointedly express frustration if any attempt was made to help him with a task that he could perform himself..The third-floor apartment directly over Enoch Cain's unit had been leased by Simon Magusson, through his corporation, ever since it became available in March of '66, twenty-two months ago..Surprising himself more than anyone, Edom also presented his collection to the university. Out with tornadoes, hurricanes, tidal waves, earthquakes, and volcanoes; bring in the roses. He lightly renovated his small apartment, painted it in brighter colors, and throughout the autumn, he stocked his bookshelves with volumes on horticulture, excitedly planning a substantial expansion of the rosarium come spring..Junior Cain was committed to continuous self-improvement. He believed in the need constantly to expand his knowledge and horizons order to better understand himself and the world. The quality of life was solely the responsibility of oneself he author of How to Have a Healthier Life through Autohypnosis was Dr. Caesar Zedd, a renowned psychologist and best-selling author of a dozen self-help texts, all of which Junior owned in addition to the literature that he had acquired

from the book club. When he had been only fourteen, he'd begun buying Dr. Zedd's titles in paperback, and by the time he was eighteen, when he could afford to do so, he'd replaced the paperbacks with hardcovers and thereafter bought all the doctor's new books in the higher-priced editions. The collected works. Celestina said, "Phimie wasn't a mind reader. That's science fiction, Dr. Lipscomb." When Agnes crunched the ice, the nurse said, "No, no. Don't swallow it all at once. Let it melt." He was as solid as any boy. He was in the day but not in the rain. He was moving toward the back of the car. Although she had never seen snow other than in pictures and on film, this deep-settled silence seemed to speak of failing flakes, of white muffling mantles, and she wouldn't have been in the least surprised if, stepping outside, she had found herself in a glorious winter landscape, cold and crystalline, here on the always-snowless hills and shores of the California Pacific. The heavy hand would come down on his shoulder, he would be spun around against his will, and there before him would be those nailhead eyes, the port-wine stain, facial bones crushed by a bludgeon. . . . Unable to run, he raised his arms defensively, crossing them in front of his face, though the impact of the coins wasn't painful. Volleys flicked off his fingers, palms, and wrists. In spite of the urgency of his desire, he followed a circuitous route to Victorial's, doubling back on himself twice, watching for surveillance as he drove. If he were being followed, his tail was an invisible man in a ghost car. WEDNESDAY, fully two days after delivering honey-raisin pear pies with Agnes, Edom worked up the nerve to visit Jacob. Books were stacked high on a nearby table, favorite novels and volumes of verse, all of which Agnes had read before. With time so limited, she preferred the comfort of the familiar to the possibility that new writers and new stories would fail to please. Paul read to her often, as did Angel. Tom Vanadium sat with her, too, as did Celestina and Grace. Barty wanted to hug her. He did hug her. He hugged Angel, too. He hugged Tom Vanadium. He moved from a crib to a bed of his own, with guardrails, months ahead of the average toddler. Within a week, he requested that the rails be left down. If magic explained the jacks on Friday evening, maybe it was the dark variety of magic. Maybe he shouldn't be endeavoring to summon, once more, whatever spirit was responsible for the four knives. She was in Paul's arms again, as though by magic, and he ran as fire broke through the cedar-shake shingles and as the roof shuddered under them. Airborne through billowing smoke. Across flames that briefly caressed the soles of his shoes. I have trusted in thy mercy, she thought desperately, reaching for comfort to Psalms 13:5. "As I explained, he might have thought I was you," Edom said, staring at the neatly ordered volumes on the nearby bookshelves. Thrilled to have inspired this awe in her, he closed the book. "Remember what we talked about a long time ago? You asked me how come, if I could walk where the rain wasn't. . . ." Junior approached the headstone from behind, circled it, and shone the flashlight on the chiseled facts: Like autumn-red ivy, lushly leafed vines of flame crawled up the house. The porch under them was ablaze, as well. Shingles smoldered beneath their feet, and flames ringed the roof on which they stood. Jacob intended to carry the luggage, and Edom announced that he would carry Barty. The boy, however, insisted on making his own way to the house. His silent tears accomplished what his words could not: Nork, Knacker, and Hisscus retreated, urging him to speak to his attorney, promising to return, once more expressing their deepest condolences, perhaps as abashed as attorneys and political appointees could get, but certainly confused and unsure how to proceed when dealing with a man so untouched by greed, so free of anger, so forgiving as the widower Cain. "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." Celestina hardly knew Paul, and although he'd saved her mother's life, his offer raised a look of doubt from her. "Acute nervous emesis," Junior croaked. "I've never thought of myself as a nervous person." And when she finally looked directly at him, blinked at him, her lashes flicking off a spray of fine droplets, Agnes saw that Barty was dry. Not a single jewel of rain glimmered in his thick dark hair or on the baby-smooth planes of his face. His shirt and sweater were as dry as if they had just been taken off a hanger and from a dresser drawer. A few drops darkened the legs of the boy's khaki pants—but Agnes realized this was water that had dripped from her arm as she'd reached across him to adjust the vent. Thanks to his intelligence and his personality, Barty's presence was so great for his age that Agnes tended to think of him as being physically larger and stronger than he actually was. As the scent of grass grew more complex and even more appealing, she saw her son more clearly than she'd seen him in a while: quite small, fatherless yet brave, burdened with a gift that was a blessing but that also made a normal boyhood impossible, forced to grow up at a up faster pace than any child should be required to endure. Barty was achingly delicate, so vulnerable that when Agnes looked at him, she felt a little of the awful sense of helplessness that burdened Edom and Jacob. "Yes, I'm nicely rounding myself into an early grave," he said almost cheerfully. "And I must admit to enjoying it." He couldn't easily refuse the assignment. Later that year, President Lyndon Johnson, with strong backing from both the Democratic and the Republican Parties, was expected to sign the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and currently it was dangerous for clearheaded believers in the primacy of self to express their healthy instincts, which might be mistakenly perceived as racial prejudice. He could be fired. Ordinarily, she would have returned to the first of the candles and offered a second fragment to Saint Peter. In this case, however, she entrusted it to the least known of the apostles, because she was sure that he must have special significance in this matter. The Beatles began singing the number-one song, "I Feel Fine," as Junior turned off the county highway and followed the lake road northeast around the oil-black water. They had two titles in the American top five. In disgust, he switched off the radio. 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. AGNES ALWAYS ENJOYED Christmas Eve dinner with Edom and Jacob, because even they tempered their pessimism on this night of nights. Whether the season touched their hearts or they wanted even more than usual to please their sister, she didn't know. If gentle Edom spoke of killer tornadoes

or if dear Jacob was reminded of massive explosions, each dwelt not on horrible death, as usual, but on feats of courage in the midst of dire catastrophe, recounting astonishing rescues and miraculous escapes..AT ST. MARY'S HOSPITAL, where Wally had brought Angel into this world three years ago, he was now fighting for his life, for a chance to see the girl grow and to be the father she needed. He'd been taken to surgery already when Celestina and Angel arrived a few minutes behind the ambulance..OUR LADY OF SORROWS, quiet and welcoming in the Bright Beach night, humble in dimension, without groin vaults and grand columns and cavernous transepts, restrained in ornamentation, was as familiar to Maria Elena Gonzalez--and as comforting--as her own home. God was everywhere in the world, but here in particular. Maria felt happier the instant she stepped through the entrance door into the narthex..Yet when he put her down in the upstairs hall, she cried out for her husband--"Harry!" "-and tried to plunge once more into the narrow stairwell..place settings. He returned with them to the kitchen and put them in the lower oven, as though Victoria were using it as a plate warmer..With the infant in her arms, the heavysset nurse pressed in beside Celestina, who.As if a door had briefly opened between this windless day and another world, a single gust rattled rain against the windows.. "Fear?" Kathleen asked, more interested in Vanadium's words than in his prestidigitation. "You said you're offering fear to Cain ... as if that was something he would want." "Mr. Cain, if he bothers you, would you want me to have his choke chain yanked?".Sliding one hand lightly along the railing, the boy quickly descended the short flight of steps and walked onto the soggy lawn, into the rain..No weekend had ever passed so quickly, and no midnight had ever brought with it such dread.. "Fifty died in London, in '57, when two trains crashed. And a hundred twelve were crushed, torn, mangled, in '52, also England." Agnes hoped that the boy would spend a night or two in her room, until he was reoriented to the house. But Barty wanted to sleep in his own bed..She tried to tell him that he was going to make it, that he would be with her for a long time, that the universe was not so cruel as to take him at thirty with all their lives ahead of them, but the truth was here to see, and she could not lie to him..At this extreme end of town, no streetlamps lit the pavement. With only moonlight to reveal him, he wasn't likely to be recognized if anyone happened to glance out a window..As they dropped toward the surgical floor, the solemn sister said, "Another hypertensive crisis..The wink startled and baffled Edom. Oddly, he thought of the mysterious, disembodied, and eternally unwinking eye in the floating pinnacle of the pyramid that was on the back of any one-dollar bill..Being blind had few consolations, but Barty found that not being able to look at his uncles' files and books was one of them. In the past, he never really, in his heart, wanted to see those pictures of dead people roasted in theater fires and drowned bodies floating in flooded streets, but a few times he peeked. His mom would have been ashamed of him if she'd discovered his transgression. But the mystery of death had an undeniable creepy allure, and sometimes a good Father Brown detective story simply didn't satisfy his curiosity. He always regretted looking at those photos and reading the grim accounts of disaster, and now blindness spared him that regret..Matching her fierce attention with a sudden intensity of his own, Joey said, "Bartholomew." She got out of the cab and stood on the sidewalk in front of the gallery, her legs as shaky as those of a newborn colt.. "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." He warily surveyed those around him as he walked, and looked over his shoulder from time to time. On one of these backward glances, he was unnerved but not surprised to see Vanadium's specter..He didn't pause to lock the house behind them. Bright Beach, in 1965, was as free of criminals as it was untroubled by lumbering brontosaurus..From out of the fog and darkness came the slap of running feet on bricks. He was sprinting toward the back of the house..He liked her face, too. She wore no makeup, and pulled her brown hair back in a bun. Some might say she was mousy, but the only things mousy that Nolly saw about her were a piquant tilt to her nose and a certain cuteness..Of course, when turning a quarter across his knuckles, the cop had made no noise. And he had glided across the hospital room, in the dark, with feline stealth.. "That's the roaster tower," said Licky. "Where they cook the cinnabar to get the metal from it. Roasters die in a year or two. Where to, dowser?".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..WHEN DR. JIM PARKHURST made his evening rounds, Junior didn't continue to feign sleep but asked earnest questions to which he knew most of the answers, having eavesdropped on the conversation between the physician and Detective Vanadium..The moment that the roof of the car vanished beneath the water, Junior hurried away, retracing on foot the route he had driven. He didn't have to go all the way back to Vanadium's place, only to the dark house where he'd left Victoria Bressler. He had a date with a dead woman..This time, he vowed never to kill again, except in self-defense, regardless of the provocation. This tougher condition pleased him. No one achieved significant self-improvement by setting low standards for himself. "There is no king in Earthsea," the young man said, stern and righteous, "In my master's service, then," Hound amended, patient..When Junior complained of severe thirst, Victoria explained that he was to have nothing by mouth until morning. He would be put on a liquid diet for breakfast and lunch. Soft foods might be allowable by dinnertime tomorrow..Kneeling at her side, Junior placed the decorative pillow over her lovely face and pressed down firmly while Frank Sinatra finished "Hello, Young Lovers," and sang perhaps half of "All or Nothing at All." Victoria never regained consciousness, never had a chance to struggle..Spinning off the stool, he had also spun out of control. Second by second, twin storms of anger and fear whirled stronger within him..Vanadium hadn't seen the man who had clubbed him from behind and who had smashed his face with a pewter candlestick, but when~ he spoke the name Enoch Cain, the quality in his eyes was not compassion. No fingerprints had been left, no evidence in the aftermath of the fire at the Bressler house or in the Studebaker hauled from Quarry Lake..Junior closed his eyes at once and let his jaw sag, breathing through his mouth, feigning sleep..Junior was aware that all the cops were watching him as he stared down at the body, and he frantically tried to think what an innocent husband would be likely to do or say, but

his imagination failed him. His thoughts could not be organized..Finally sleeping, he had anxiety dreams of being in a public rest room, overcome by urgent need, only to find that every stall was occupied by someone he had killed, all of them vengefully determined to deny him a chance for dignified relief..By the time he went to bed Saturday night, the cards that had been only that morning were showing signs of wear..The driver's door opened, shoving aside a damaged tea table, and a man climbed out of the Pontiac.."Cancer," she whispered, and superstitiously reproached herself for speaking the word aloud, as though thereby she'd given power to the malignancy and ensured its existence..The Bright Beach Library was open until nine on Friday evening. Arriving an hour before closing, they returned the Heinlein novels that Barty had already read and checked out the three that he wanted. In a spirit of optimism, they borrowed a fourth, Podkayne of Mars.

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