Proofed using, and recommend reading with WordPad, wrap to Windows @ $1024x768$ resolution on an 17 -inch Monitor.
(scanned and fully proofed by nihua, 2002-05-04)
READ THIS BEFORE GOING ANY FURTHER!
This work is copyrighted material. This file is for my archive (fair use) only. Avail of this file only if you own the printed book; otherwise either go and buy the book, or please delete the file immediately.
-nihua.
Note:
Get the RTF format of this file, for a fully formatted version of this eBook.
THE EXORCIST
©1971, William Peter Blatty
THE EXORCIST
A CORGI BOOK 0 552 09156 1
Originally published in Great Britain
by Blond & Briggs Ltd.

PRINTING HISTORY

Blond & Briggs edition published 1972
Corgi edition published 1972
Corgi edition reprinted 1974
Copyright ©1971 by William Peter Blatty
Condition of sale This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.
Corgi Books are published by Transworld Publishers Ltd.,
Cavendish House, 57-59 Uxbridge Road,
Ealing, London W.5.
Made and printed in Canada
by Rohalds Federated Graphics
To my brothers and sisters,
Maurice, Edward and Alyce,
and in loving memory of my parents.

'Now when [Jesus] stepped ashore, there met him a certain man who for a long time was possessed by a devil.... Many times it had laid hold of him and he was bound with chains.... but he would break the bonds asunder.... And Jesus asked him, saying, "What is thy name?" And he said Legion....' Luke 8:27-30 James Torello: Jackson was hung up on that meat hook. He was so heavy he bent it. He was on that thing three days before he croaked. Frank Buccieri (giggling): Jackie, you shoulda seen the guy. Like an elephant, he was, and when Jimmy hit him with that electric prod... Torello (excitedly): He was floppin' around on that hook, Jackie. We tossed water on him to give the prod a better charge, and he's screamin'.... Excerpt from FBI wiretap of Cosa Nostra telephone conversation relating to murder of William Jackson ... There's no other explanation for some of the things the Communists did. Like the priest who had eight nails driven into his skull.... And there were seven little boys and their teacher. They were praying the Our Father when soldiers came upon them. One soldier whipped out his bayonet and sliced off the teacher's tongue. The other took chopsticks and drove them into the ears of the seven little boys. How do you treat cases like that? Dr. Tom Dooley Dachau Auschwitz Buchenwald

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I Have taken a few liberties with the current geography of Georgetown University, notably with respect to the present location of the Institute of Languages and Linguistics. Moreover, the house on Prospects Street does not exist, nor does the reception room of the Jesuit residence halls as I have described it.
The fragment of prose attributed to Lankester Merrin is not my creation, but is taken from a sermon of John Henry Newman entitled 'The Second Spring'.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
My special thanks to Herbert Tanney, M.D.; Mr. Joseph E. Jeffs, Librarian, Georgetown University; Mr. William Bloom; and Mrs. Ann Harris, my editor at Harper & Row, for their invaluable assistance and generosity in the preparation of this work. I would also like to thank the Rev. Thomas V. Bermingham, S.J., Vice-Provincial for Formation of the New York Province of the Society of Jesus, for suggesting the subject matter of this novel; and Mr. Marc Jaffe of Bantam Books for his singular (and lonely) faith in its eventual worth. To these mentions I would like to add Dr. Bernard M. Wagner of Georgetown University, for teaching me to write, and the Jesuits, for teaching me to think.
PROLOGUE
Northern Iraq

The blaze of sun wrung pops of sweat from the old man's brow, yet he cupped his hands around the glass of hot sweet tea as if to warm them. He could not shake the premonition. It clang to his back like chill wet leaves.

The dig was over. The tell had been sifted, stratum by stratum, its entrails examined, tagged and shipped: the beds and pendants; glyptics; phalli; ground-stone mortars stained with ocher; burnished pots. Nothing exceptional. An Assyrian ivory toilet box. And man. The bones of man. The brittle remnants of cosmic torment that once made him wonder if matter was Lucifer upward-groping back to his God. And yet now he knew better. The fragrance of licorice plant and tamarisk tugged his gaze to poppied hills; to reeded plains; to the ragged, rock-strewn bolt of road that flung itself headlong into dread. Northwest was Mosul; east, Erbil; south was Baghdad and Kirkuk and the fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar. He shifted his legs underneath the table in front of the lonely roadside chaykhana and stared at the grass stains on his boots and khaki pants. He sipped at his tea. The dig was over. What was beginning? He dusted the thought like a clay-fresh find but he could not tag it.

Someone wheezed from within the chaykhana: the withered proprietor shuffling toward him, kicking up dust in Russian-made shoes that he wore like slippers, groaning backs pressed under his heels. The dark of his shadow slipped over the table.

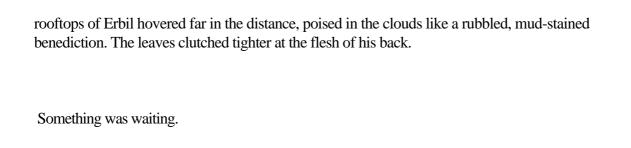
"Kaman chay, chawaga?"

The man, in khaki shook his head, staring down at the laceless, crusted shoes caked thick with debris of the pain of living. The stuff of the cosmos, he softly reflected: matter; yet somehow finally spirit. Spirit and the shoes were to him but aspects of a stuff more fundamental, a stuff that was primal and totally other.

The shadow shifted. The Kurd stood waiting like an ancient debt. The old man in khaki looked up into eyes that were damply bleached as if the membrane of an eggshell had been pasted over the irises. Glaucoma. Once he could not have loved this man.

He slipped out his wallet and probed for a coin among its tattered, crumpled tenants: a few dinars; an Iraqi driver's license; a faded plastic calendar card that was twelve years out of date. It bore an inscription on the reverse: WHAT WE GIVE TO THE POOR IS WHAT WE TAKE WITH US WHEN WE DIE. The card had been printed by the Jesuit Missions. He paid for his tea and left a tip of fifty fils on a splintered table the color of sadness.

He walked to his jeep. The gentle, rippling click of key sliding into ignition was crisp in the silence. For a moment he waited, feeling at the stillness. Clustered on the summit of a towering mound, the fractured



"Allah ma'ak, chawaga."

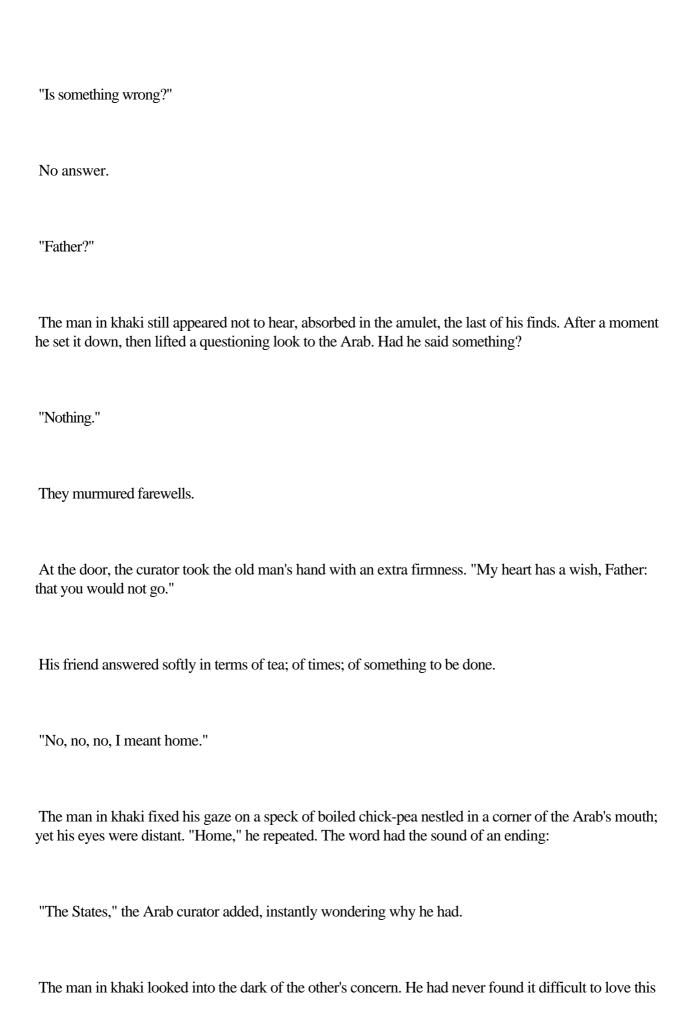
Rotted teeth. The Kurd was grinning, waving farewell. The man in khaki groped for a warmth in his pit of his being and came up with a wave and a mustered smile. It dimmed as he looked away. He started the engine, turned in a narrow, eccentric U and headed toward Mosul. The Kurd stood watching, puzzled by a heart-dropping sense of loss as the jeep gathered speed. What was it that was gone? What was it he had felt in the stranger's presence? Something like safety, he remembered; a sense of protection and deep well-being. Now it dwindled in the distance with the fast-moving jeep. He felt strangely alone.

The painstaking inventory was finished by ten after six. The Mosul curator of antiquities, an Arab with sagging cheeks, was carefully penning a final entry into the ledger on his desk. For a moment he paused, looking up at his friend, as he dipped his penpoint into an inkpot. The man in khaki seemed lost in thought. He was standing by a table, hand in his pockets, staring down at some dry, tagged whisper of the past. The curator observed him, curious, unmoving; then returned to the entry, writing in a firm, very small neat script. Then at last he sighed, setting down the pen as he noted the time. The train to Baghdad left at eight. He blotted the page and offered tea.

The man in khaki shook his head, his eyes still fixed upon something on the table. The Arab watched him, vaguely troubled. What was in the air? There was something in the air. He stood up and moved closer; then felt a vague prickling at the base of his neck as his friend at last moved, reaching down for an amulet and cradling it pensively in his hand. It was a green stone head of the demon Pazuzu, personification of the southwest wind. Its dominion was sickness and disease. The head was pierced. The amulet's owner had worn it as a shield.

"Evil against evil," breathed the curator, languidly fanning himself with a French scientific periodical, an olive-oil thumbprint smudged on the cover.

His friend did not move; he did not comment.



n	าว	ìr	1

"Good-bye;" he whispered; then quickly turned and stepped into the gathering gloom of the streets and a journey home whose length seemed somehow undetermined.

"I will see you in a year!" the curator called after him from the doorway. But the man in khaki never looked back. The Arab watched his dwindling form as he crossed a narrow street at an angle, almost colliding with a swiftly moving droshky. Its cab bore a corpulent old Arab woman, her face a shadow behind the black lace veil draped loosely over her like a shroud. He guessed she was rushing to some appointment. He soon lost sight of his hurrying friend.

The man in khaki walked, compelled.. Shrugging loose of the city, he breached the outskirts, crossing the Tigris. Nearing the ruins, he slowed his pace, for- with every step the inchoate presentiment took firmer, more horrible form. Yet he had to know. He would have to prepare.

A wooden plank that bridged the Khosr, a muddy stream, creaked under his weight. And then he was there; he stood on the mound where once gleamed fifteen-gated Nineveh, feared nest of Assyrian hordes. Now the city lay sprawled in the bloody dust of its predestination. And yet he was here, the air was still thick with him, that Other who ravaged his dreams.

A Kurdish watchman, rounding a corner, unslung his rifle and began to run toward him, then abruptly stopped and grinned with a wave of recognition and proceeded on his rounds.

The man in khaki prowled the ruins. The Temple of Nabu. The Temple of Ishtar. He sifted vibrations. At the palace of Ashurbanipal he paused; then shifted a sidelong glance to a limestone statue hulking in situ: ragged wings; taloned feet; bulbous, jutting, stubby penis and a mouth stretched taut in a feral grin. The demon Pazuzu.

Abruptly he sagged.

He knew.

It was coming.

He stared at the dust. Quickening shadows He heard dim yappings of savage dog packs prowling the fringes of the city. The orb of the sun was beginning to fall below the rim of the world. He rolled his shirt sleeves down and buttoned them as a shivering breeze sprang up. Its source was southwest.
He hastened toward Mosul and his train, his heart encased in the icy conviction that soon he would face an ancient enemy.
(End of prologue * Scanned and fully proofed by nihua)
I: The Beginning
CHAPTER ONE
Like the brief doomed flare of exploding suns that registers dimly on blind men's eyes, the beginning of the horror passed almost unnoticed; in the shriek of what followed, in fact, was forgotten and perhaps not connected to the horror at all. It was difficult to judge.

The house was a rental. Brooding. Tight. A bride colonial gripped by ivy in the Georgetown section of Washington, D.C. Across the street was a fringe of campus belonging to Georgetown University; to the rear, a sheer embankment plummeting steep to busy M Street and, beyond, the muddy Potomac. Early on the morning of April 1, the house was quiet. Chris MacNeil was propped in bed, going over her lines for the neat day's filming; Regan, her daughter, was sleeping down the hall; and asleep downstairs in a room off the pantry were the middle-aged housekeepers, Willie and Karl. At approximately 12:25 A.M., Chris glanced from her script with a frown of puzzlement. She heard rapping sounds. They were odd. Muffed. Profound. Rhythmically clustered. Alien code tapped out by a dead man.

Funny.
She listened for a moment; then dismissed it; but as the rappings persisted she could not concentrate. She slapped down the script on the bed.
Jesus, that bugs me!
She got up to investigate.
She went out to the hallway and looked around. It seemed to be coming from Regan's bedroom.
What is she doing?
She padded down the hall and the rappings grew suddenly louder, much faster, and as she pushed on the door and stepped into the room, they abruptly ceased.
What the heck's going on?
Her pretty eleven-year-old was asleep, cuddled tight to a large stuffed round-eyed panda. Pookey. Faded from years of smothering; years of smacking, warm, wet kisses.
Chris moved softly to her bedside and leaned over for a whisper. "Rags? You awake?"
Regular breathing. Heavy. Deep.
Chris shifted her glance around the room. Dim light from the hall fell pale and splintered on Regan's paintings; on Regan's sculptures; on more stuffed animals.

Okay, Rags. Old mother's ass is draggin'. Say it. "April Fool!" And yet Chris knew it wasn't like her. The child had a shy and very diffident nature. Then who was the trickster? A somnolent mind imposing order on the rattlings of heating pipes or plumbing? Once, in the mountains of Bhutan, she had stared for hours at a Buddhist monk who was squatting on the ground in meditation. Finally, she thought she had seen him levitate. Perhaps. Recounting the story to someone, she invariably added "perhaps." And perhaps her mind, that untiring raconteur of illusion, had embellished the rappings. Bullshit! I heard it! Abruptly, she flicked a quick glance to the ceiling. There! Faint scratchings. Rats in the attic, for pete's sake! Rats! She sighed. That's it. Big tails. Thump, thump. She felt oddly relieved. And then noticed the cold. The room. It was icy. She padded to the window. Checked it. Closed. She touched the radiator. Hot. Oh, really? Puzzled, she moved to the bedside and, touched her hand to Regan's cheek. It was smooth as thought and lightly perspiring. I must be sick!

She looked at her daughter, at the turned-up nose and freckled face, and on a quick, warm impulse

leaned over the bed and kissed her cheek. "I sure do love you," she whispered, then returned to her room and her bed and her script.

For a while, Chris studied. The film was a musical comedy remake of Mr. Smith Goes to Washington. A subplot had been added dealing with campus insurrections. Chris was starring. She played a psychology teacher who sided with the rebels. And she hated it. It's dumb! This scene is absolutely dumb! Her mind, though untutored, never mistook slogans for truth, and like a curious bluejay she would peck relentlessly through verbiage to find the glistening, hidden fact. And so the rebel cause, to her, was "dumb." It didn't make sense. How come? she now wondered. Generation gap? That's a crock; I'm thirty-two. It's just plain dumb, that's all, it's...!

Cool it. One more week.

They'd completed the interiors in Hollywood. All that remained were a few exterior scenes on the campus of Georgetown University, starting tomorrow. It was Easter vacation and the students were away.

She was getting drowsy. Heavy lids. She turned to a page that was curiously ragged. Bemused, she smiled. Her English director. When especially tense, he would tear, with quivering, fluttering hands, a narrow strip from the edge of the handiest page and then chew it, inch by inch, until it was all in a ball in his mouth.

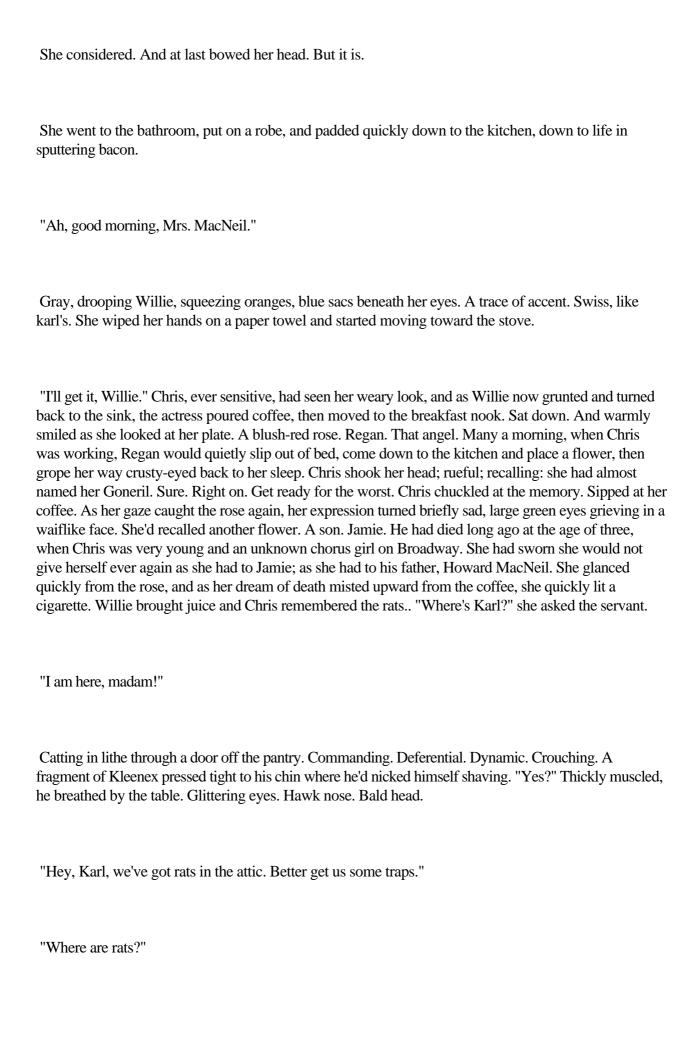
Dear Burke.

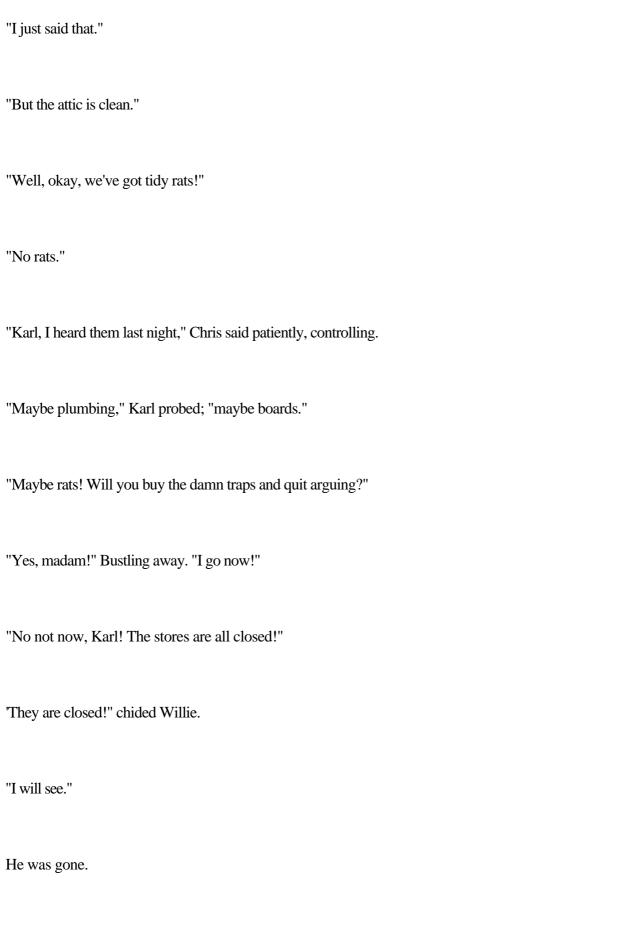
She yawned, then glanced fondly at the side of her script. The pages looked gnawed. She remembered the rats. The little bastards sure got rhythm. She made a mental note to have Karl set traps for them in the morning.

Fingers relaxing. Script slipping loose. She let it drop. Dumb. It's dumb. A fumbling hand groping out to the light switch. There. She sighed. For a time she was motionless, almost asleep; and then kicked off her covers with a lazy leg. Too freaking hot.

A mist of dew clung soft and gentle to the windowpanes.

Chris slept. And dreamed about death in the staggering particular, death as if death were still never yet heard of while something was ringing, she gasping, dissolving, slipping off into void, thinking over and over, I am not going to be, I will die, I won't be, and forever and ever, oh, Papa, don't let them, oh, don't let them do it, don't let me be nothing forever and melting, unraveling, ringing, the ringing
The phone!
She leaped up with her heart pounding, hand to the phone and no weight in her stomach; a core with no weight and her telephone ringing.
She answered. The assistant director.
"In makeup at six, honey."
"Right."
"How ya feelin'?"
"If I go to the bathroom and it doesn't burn, then I figure I'm ahead."
He chuckled. "I'll see yon."
"Right. And thanks."
She hung up. And for moments sat motionless, thinking of the dream. A dream? More like thought in the half life of waking. That terrible clarity. Gleam of the skull. Non-being. Irreversible. She could not imagine it. God. it can't be!





Chris and Willie traded glances, and then Willie shook her head, turning back to the bacon. Chris sipped at her coffee. Strange. Strange man. Like Willie, hard-working; very loyal; discreet. And yet something -about him made her vaguely uneasy. What was it? His subtle air of arrogance? Defiance? No.

Something else. Something hard to pin down. The couple had been with her for almost six years, and yet Karl was a mask--- a talking, breathing, untranslated hieroglyph running her errands on stilted legs. Behind the mask, though, something moved; she could hear his mechanism ticking like a conscience. She stubbed out her cigarette; heard the front door creaking open, then shut.

"They are closed," muttered Willie.

Chris nibbled at bacon, then returned to her room, where she dressed in her costume sweater and skirt. She glanced in a mirror and solemnly stared at her short red hair, which looked perpetually tousled; at the burst of freckles on the small, scrubbed face; then crossed her eyes and grinned idiotically. Hi, little wonderful girl next door! Can I speak to your husband? Your lover? Your pimp? Oh, your pimp's in the poorhouse? Avon calling! She stuck out her tongue at herself. Then sagged. Ah, Christ, what a life! She picked up her wig box, slouched downstairs, and walked out to the piquant tree-lined street.

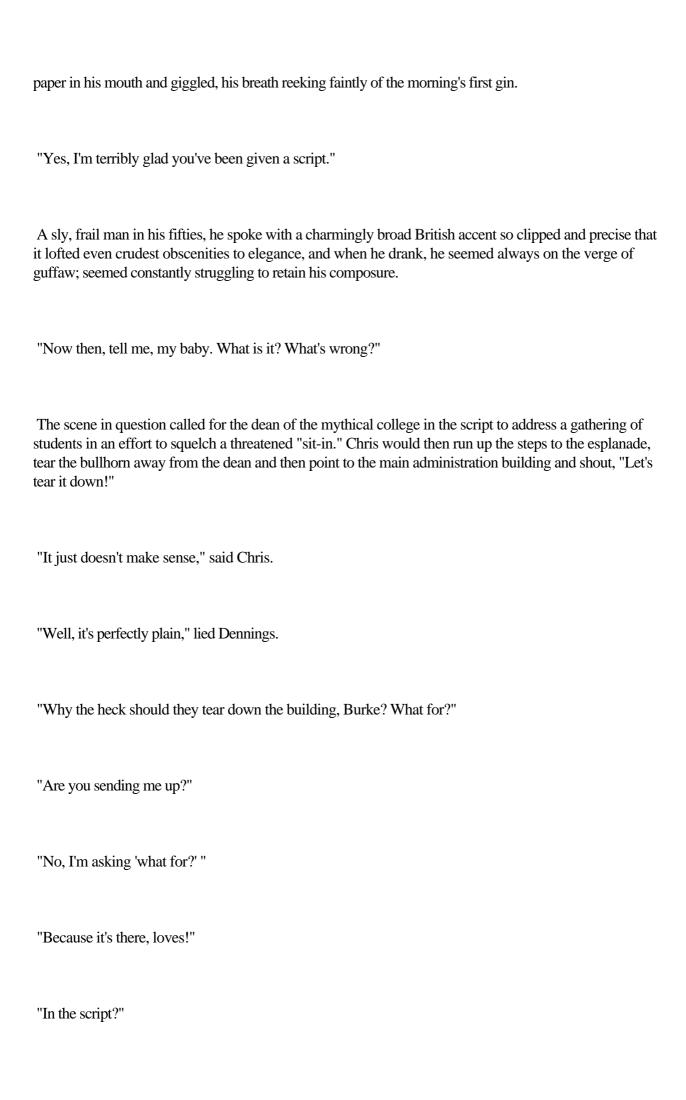
For a moment she paused outside the house and gulped at the morning. She looked to the right. Beside the house, a precipitous plunge of old stone steps fell away to M Street far below. A little beyond was the upper entry to the Car Barn, formerly used for the housing of streetcars: Mediterranean, tiled roof; rococo turrets; antique brick. She regarded it wistfully. Fun. Fun street. Dammit, why don't I stay? But the house? Start to live? From somewhere a bell began to toll. She glanced toward the sound. The tower clock on the Georgetown campus. The melancholy resonance echoed on the river; shivered; seeped through her tired heart. She walked toward her work; toward ghastly charade; toward the straw-stuffed, antic imitation of dust.

She entered the main front gates of the campus and her depression diminished; then grew even less as she looked at the row of trailer dressing rooms aligned along the driveway close to the southern perimeter wall; and by 8 A.M. and the day's first shot, she was almost herself: She started an argument over the script.

"Hey, Burke? Take a look at this damned thing, will ya?"

"Oh, you do have a script, I see! How nice!" Director Burke Dennings, taut and, elfin, left eye twitching yet gleaming with mischief, surgically shaved a narrow strip from a page of her script with quivering fingers "I believe I'll munch," he cackled.

They were standing on the esplanade that fronted the administration building and were knotted in the center of actors; lights; technicians; extras; grips. Here and there a few spectators dotted the lawn, mostly Jesuit faculty. Numbers of children. The cameraman, bored, picked up Daily Variety as Dennings put the



"No, on the grounds!"
"Well, it doesn't make sense, Burke. She just wouldn't do that."
"She would."
"No, she wouldn't."
"Shall we summon the writer? I believe he's in Paris!"
"Hiding?"
"Fucking!"
He'd clipped it off with impeccable diction, fox eyes glinting in a face like dough as the word rose crisp to Gothic spires. Chris fell weak to his shoulders, laughing. "Oh, Burke, you're impossible, dammit!"
"Yes." He said it like Caesar modestly confirming reports of his triple rejection of the crown. "Now then, shall we get on with it?"
Chris didn't hear. She'd darted a furtive, embarrassed glance to a nearby Jesuit, checking to see if he'd heard the obscenity. Dark, rugged face. Like a boxer's. Chipped. In his forties. Something sad about the eyes; something pained; and yet warm and reassuring as they fastened on hers. He'd heard. He was smiling. He glanced at his watch and moved away.
"I say, shall we get on with it!"

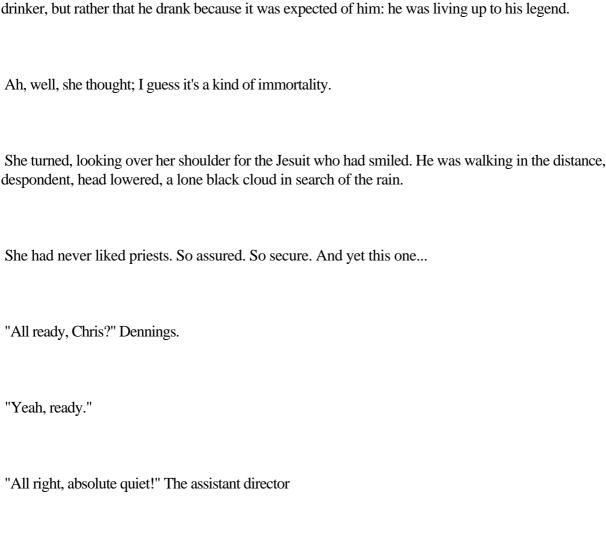


sigh of relief.

"Roll the film," ordered Burke.

"Speed."

Waiting on the lawn at the base of the steps while the lights were warming, Chris looked toward Dennings as he flung an obscenity at a hapless grip and then visibly glowed. He seemed to revel in his eccentricity. Yet at a certain point in his drinking, Chris knew, he would suddenly explode into temper, and if it happened at three or four in the morning, he was likely to telephone people in power, and viciously abuse them over trifling provocations. Chris remembered a studio chief whose offense had consisted in remarking mildly at a screening that the cuffs of Dennings' shirt looked slightly frayed, prompting Dennings to awaken him at approximately 3 A.M. to describe him as a "cunting boor" whose father was "more that likely mad!" And on the following day, he would pretend to amnesia and subtly radiate with pleasure when those he'd offended described in detail what he had done. Although, if it suited him, he would remember. Chris thought with a smile of the night he'd destroyed his studio suite of offices in a gin-stoked, mindless rage, and how later, when confronted with an itemized bill and Polaroid photos detailing the damage, he'd archly dismissed them as "Obvious fakes, the damage was far, far worse than that!" Chris did not believe that Dennings was either an alcoholic or a hopeless problem drinker, but rather that he drank because it was expected of him: he was living up to his legend.



"Now action!"

Chris ran up the steps while extras cheered and Dennings watched her, wondering what was on her mind. She'd given up the arguments far too quickly. He turned a significant look to the dialogue coach, who padded up to him dutifully and proffered his open script like an aging altar boy the missal to his priest at solemn Mass.

They worked with intermittent sun. By four, the overcast of roiling clouds was thick in the sky, and the assistant director dismissed the company for the day.

Chris walked homeward. She was tired. At the corner of Thirty-sixth and O she signed an autograph for an aging Italian grocery clerk who had hailed her from the doorway of his shop. She wrote her name and "Warm Best Wishes" on a brown paper bag. Waiting to cross, she glanced diagonally across the street to a Catholic church. Holy Something-or-other. Staffed by Jesuits. John F. Kennedy had married Jackie there-, she had heard; had worshiped there. She tried to imagine it: John F. Kennedy among the votive lights and the pious, wrinkled women; John F. Kennedy bowed in prayer; I believe... a detente with the Russians; I believe, I believe... Apollo IV among the rattlings of the beads; I believe... the resurrection and the life ever---

That. That's it. That's the grabber.

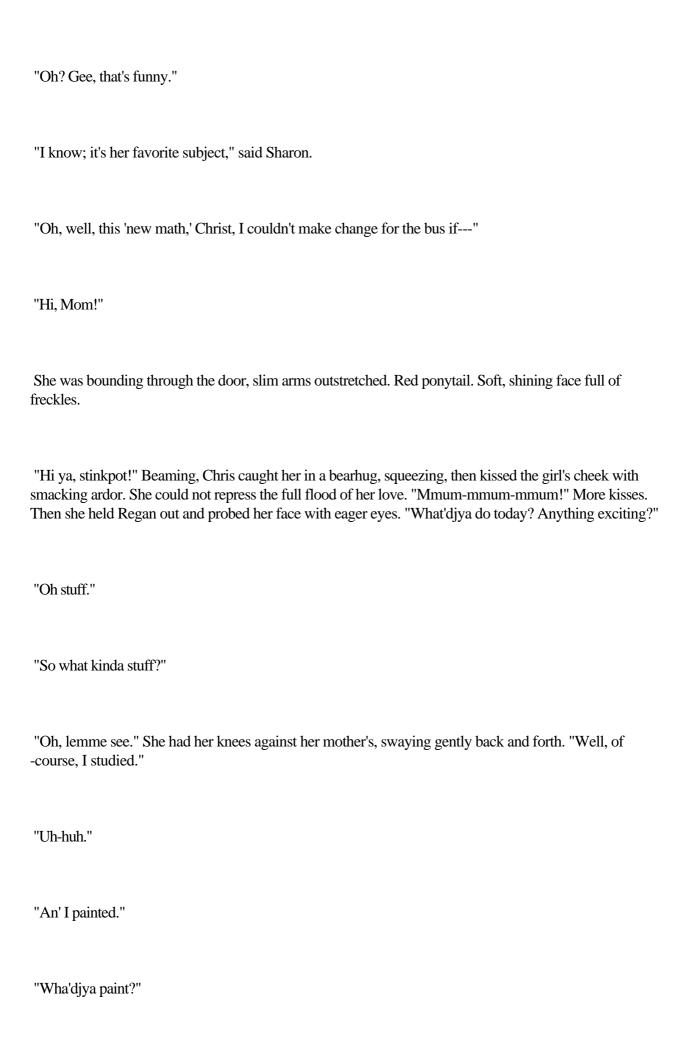
She watched as a beer truck lumbered by with a clink of quivering warm, wet promises.

She crossed. As she walked down O and passed the grade-school auditorium, a priest rushed by from behind her, hands in the pockets of a nylon windbreaker. Young. Very tense. In need of a shave. Up ahead, he took a right, turning into an easement that opened to a courtyard behind the church.

Chris paused by the easement, watching him, curious. He seemed to be heading for a white frame cottage. An old screen door creaked open and still another priest emerged. He looked glum; very nervous. He nodded curtly toward the young man, and with lowered, eyes, he moved quickly toward a







"Oh, well, flowers, ya know. Daisies? Only pink. An' then Oh, yeah! This horse!" She grew suddenly excited, eyes widening. "This man had a horse, ya know, down by the river? We were walking, see, Mom, and then along came this horse, he was beautiful! Oh, Mom, ya should've seen him, and the man let me sit on him! Really! I mean, practically a minute!"
Chris twinkled at Sharon with secret amusement. "Himself?" she asked, lifting an eyebrow. On moving to Washington for the shooting of the film, the blonde secretary, who was now virtually one of the family, had lived in the house, occupying an extra bedroom upstairs. Until she'd met the "horseman" at a nearby stable. Sharon needed a place to be alone, Chris then decided, and had moved her to a suite in an expensive hotel and insisted on paying the bill.
"Himself." Sharon smiled in response to Chris.
"It was a gray horse!" added Regan. "Mother, can't we get a horse? I mean, could we?"
"We'll see, baby."
"When could I have one?"
"We'll see. Where's the bird you made?"
Regan looked blank for a moment; then turned around to Sharon and grinned, her mouth full of braces and shy rebuke. "You told." Then, "It was a surprise," she snickered to her mother.
"You mean?"
"With the long funny nose, like you wanted!"







"Oh, I like it." "It's crap! Don't you know where it's at in this business? Directing!" "Ah, yes." "Then you've done something, something that's yours; I mean, something that lives!" "Well, then do it." "I've tried; they won't buy it." "Why not?" "Oh, come on, you know why: they don't think I can cut it." Warm remembrance. Warm smile. Dear Steve
"Mom, I can't find the dress!" Regan called from the landing.
"In the closet!" Chris answered.
"I looked!"
"I'll be up in a second!" Chris called. For a moment she examined the script. Then gradually wilted. "So its probably crap."
"Oh, come on, now. I really think it's good."
"Oh, you thought Psycho needed a laugh track."
Sharon laughed.
"Mommy?"
"I'm coming!"
Chris got up slowly. "Got a date, Shar?"
"Yes."



"Keep it up about fifteen or twenty minutes," said Sharon. "Maybe for you it would work."	
Chris halted and considered a measured response. Then gave it up. She went upstairs to Regan's bedroom, moving immediately to the closet. Regan was standing in the middle of the room staring the ceiling.	
"What's doin'?" Chris asked her, hunting for the dress. It was a pale-blue cotton. She'd bought it week before, and remembered hanging it in the closet.	the
"Funny noises," said Regan.	
"I know. We've got friends."	
Regan looked at her. "Huh?"	
"Squirrels, honey; squirrels in the attic." her daughter was squeamish and terrified of rats. Even mit upset her.	ice
The hunt for the dress proved fruitless.	
"See, Mom, it's got there."	
"Yes, I see. Maybe Willie picked it up with the cleaning."	
"It's gone."	



"Do not ask." She added an eggshell and a pinch of salt to the bubbling contents of the pot. They had gone to a movie, Willie explained. She had wanted to see the Beatles, but Karl had insisted on an art-house film about Mozart. "Terrible," she simmered as she lowered the flame. "That dumbhead!"
"Sorry 'bout that." Chris tucked the script underneath her arm. "Oh, Willie, have you seen that dress that I got for Rags last week? The blue cotton?"
"Yes, I see it in her closet. This morning."
"Where'd you put it?"
"It is there."
"You didn't maybe pick it up by mistake with the cleaning?"
"It is there."
"With the cleaning?"
"In the closet."
"No, it isn't. I looked."
About to speak, Willie tightened her lips and scowled at the coffee. Karl, had walked in.
"Good evening, madam." He went to the sink for a glass of water.

"Did you set those traps?" asked Chris.
"No rats."
"Did you set them?"
"I set them, of course; but the attic is clean."
"Tell me, how was the movie, Karl?"
"Exciting." His back, like his face, was a resolute blank.
Chris started from the kitchen, humming a song made famous by the Beatles. But the she turned. Just one more shot!
"Did you have any trouble getting the traps, Karl?"
"No; no trouble."
"At six in the morning?"
"All-night market."
Jesus!

Chris took a long and luxurious bath, and why she went to the closet in her bedroom for her robe, she discovered Regan's missing dress. It lay crumpled in a heap on the floor of the closet.

Chris picked it up. What's it doing in here?

The tags were still on it. For a moment, Clues thought back. Then remembered that the day that she'd purchased the dress, she had also bought two or three items for herself. Must've put 'em all together.

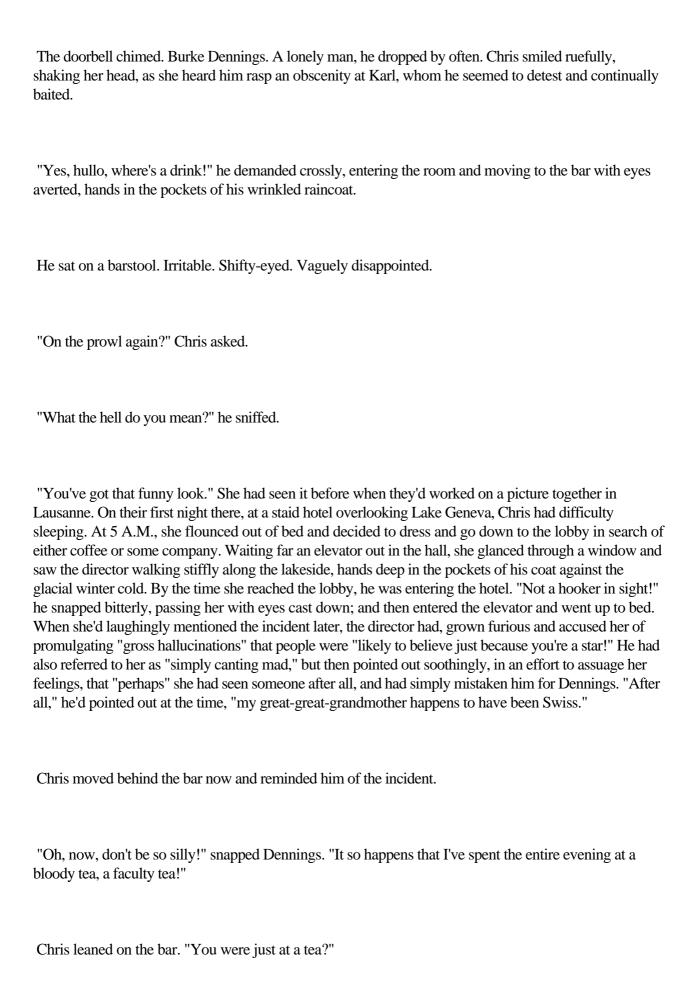
Chris carried the dress into Regan's bedroom, put it on a hanger and slipped it on the rack. She glanced at Regan's wardrobe. Nice. Nice clothes. Yeah, Rags, look here, not there at the daddy who never writes.

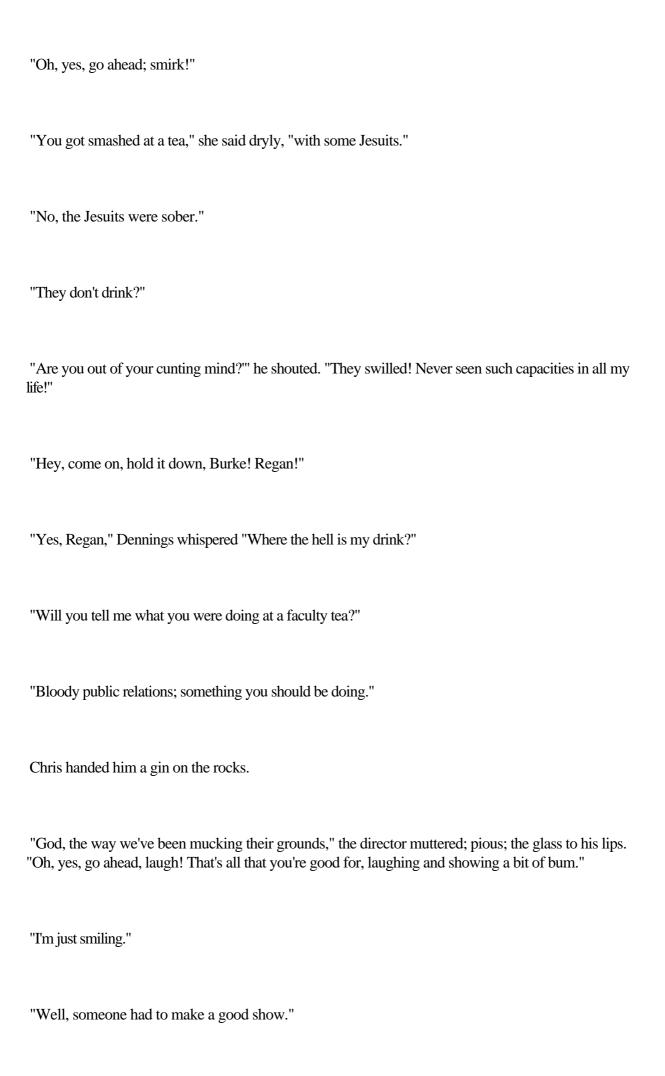
As she turned from the closet, she stubbed her toe against the base of a bureau. Oh, Jesus, that smarts! As she lifted her foot and massaged her toe, she noticed that the bureau was out of position by about three feet. No wonder I bumped it, Willie must have vacuumed.

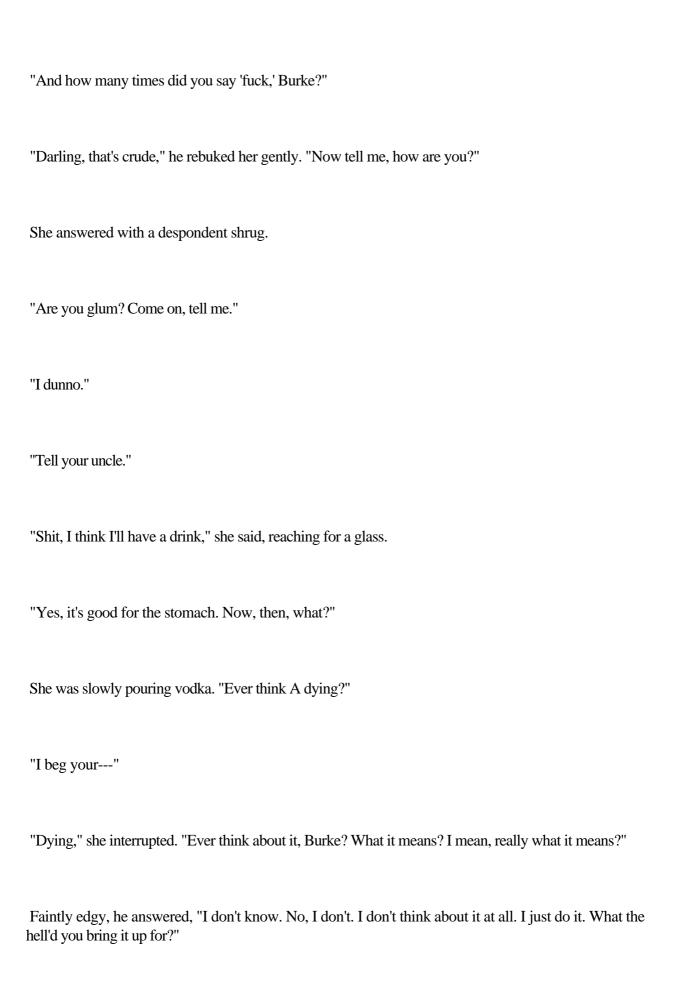
She went down to the study with the script from her agent.

Unlike the massive double living room with its large bay windows and view, the study had a feeling of whispered density; of secrets between rich uncles. Raised brick fireplace; oak paneling; crisscrossed beams of a wood that implied it had once been a drawbridge. The room's few hints of a time that was present were the added bar, a few bright pillows, and a leopardskin rug that belonged to Chris and was spread on the pinewood floor by the fire where she now stretched out with her head and shoulders propped on the front of a downy sofa.

She took another look at the letter from her agent. Faith, Hope and Charity: three distinct segments, each with a different cast and director. Hers would be Hope. She liked the idea. And she liked the title. Possibly dull, she thought; but refined. They'll probably change it to something like "Rock Around the Virtues."

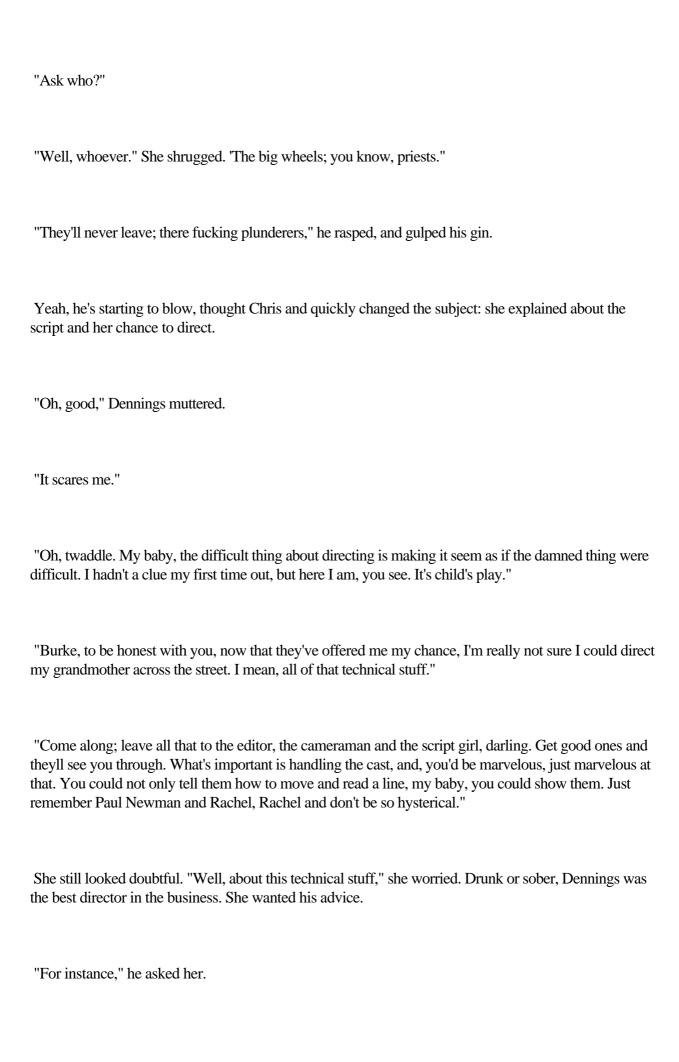














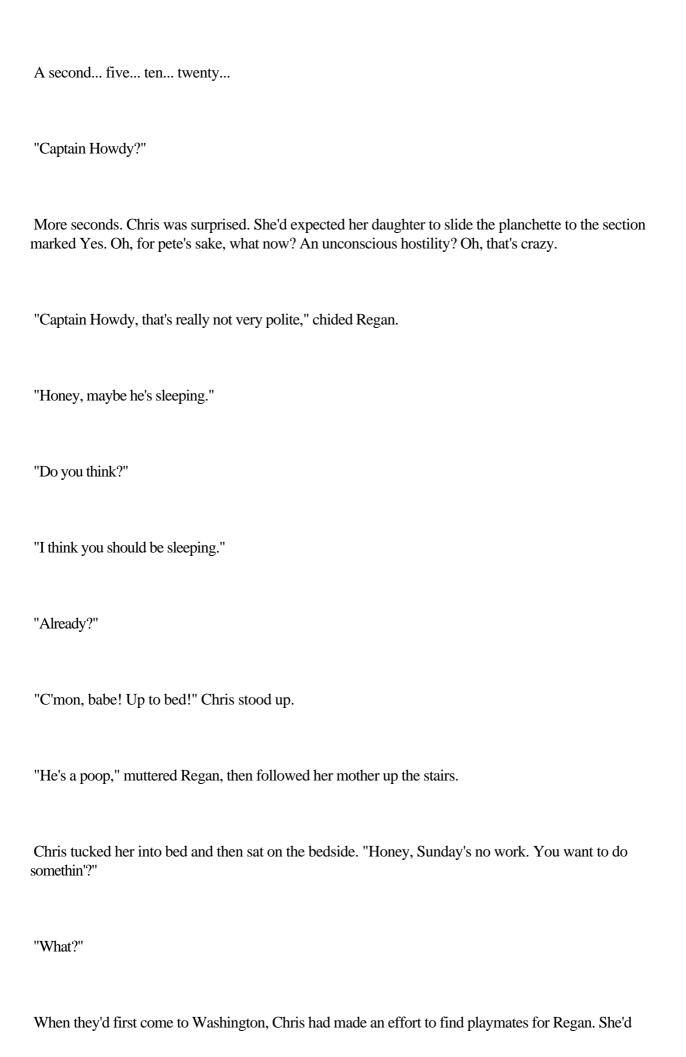






out to position hers, the pianchette made a swift, sudden move to the position on the board marked No.
Chris smiled at her slyly. "Mother, I'd rather do it myself? Is that it? You don't want me to play?"
"No, I do! Captain Howdy said 'no.' "
"Captain who?"
"Captain Howdy."
"Honey, who's Captain Howdy?"
"Oh, ya know. I make questions and he does the answers."
"Oh?"
"Oh, he's nice."
Chris tried not to frown as she felt a dim and sudden concern. The child had loved her father deeply, yet never had reacted visibly to her parents' divorce. And Chris didn't like it. Maybe she cried in her room; she didn't know. But Chris was fearful she was repressing and that her emotions might one day erupt in some harmful form. A fantasy playmate. It didn't sound healthy. Why "Howdy"? For Howard? Her father? Pretty close.
"So how come you couldn't even come up with a name for a dum-dum bird, and then you hit me with something like 'Captain Howdy'? Why do you call him 'Captain Howdy'?"
" 'Cause that's his name, of course," Regan snickered.

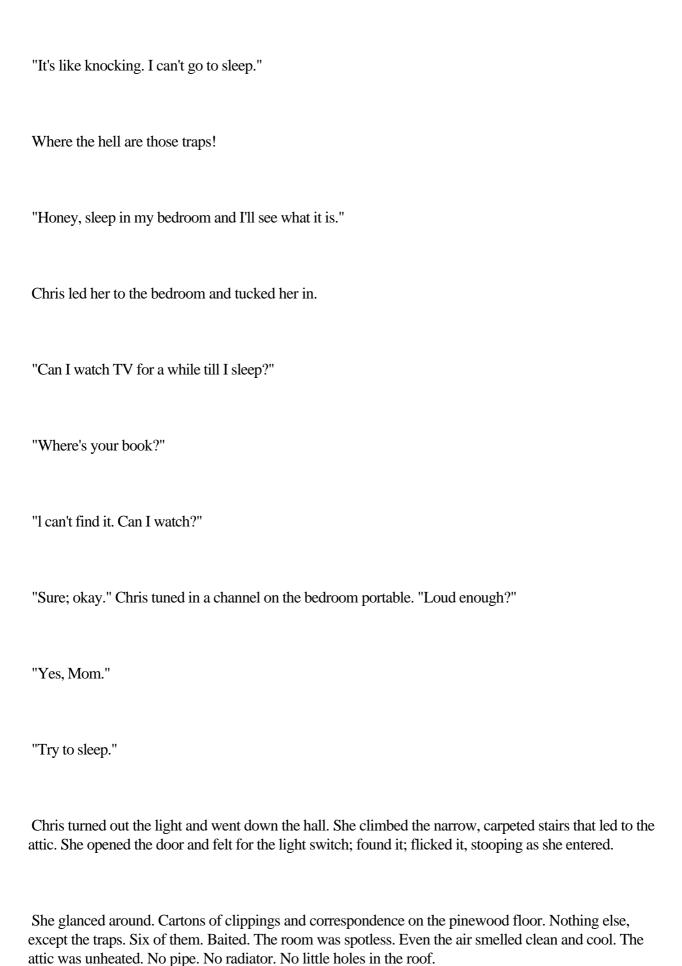
"Says who?"
"Well, him."
"Of course."
"Of course."
"And what else does he say to you?"
"Stuff."
"What stuff?"
Regan shrugged. "Just stuff."
"For instance."
"I'll show you. I'll ask him some questions."
"You do that"
Her fingertips on the planchette, Regan stared at the board with eyes drawn tight in concentration "Captain Howdy, don't you think my mom is pretty?"



uncovered only one, a twelve-year-old girl named Judy. But Judy's family was away for Easter, and Chris was concerned now that Regan might be lonely.
"Oh, well, I don't know," Chris replied. "Somethin'. You want to go see the sights? Hey, the cherry blos-soms, maybe! That's right, they're out early! You want to go see 'em?"
"Oh, yeah, Mom!"
"And tomorrow night a movie! How's that?"
"Oh, I love you!"
Regan gave her a hug and Chris hugged her back with an extra fervor, whispering, "Oh, Rags, honey, I love you."
"You can bring Mr. Dennings if you like."
Chris pulled back for an appraisal. "Mr. Dennings?"
"Well, I mean, it's okay."
Chris chuckled. "No, it isn't okay. Honey, why would I want to bring Mr. Dennings?"
"Well, you like him."
"Oh, well, sure I like him, honey; don't you?"







"There is nothing."
Chris jumped from her skin. "Oh, good Jesus!" she gasped, turning quickly with her hand to a fluttering heart. "Jesus Christ, Karl, don't do that!"
He was standing on the steps.
"Very sorry. But you see? It is clean."
"Yeah, it's clean. Thanks a lot."
"Maybe cat better."
"What?"
"To catch rats."
Without Waiting for an answer, he nodded and left.
For a moment, Chris stared at the doorway. Either Karl hadn't any sense of humor whatever, or he had one so sly it escaped her detection. She couldn't decide which one it was.
She considered the rappings again, then glanced at the angled roof. The street was shaded by various trees, most of them gnarled and interwined with vines; and the branches of a mushrooming, massive basswood umbrellaed the entire front third of the house. Was it squirrels after all? It must be. Or branches. Right. Could be branches. The nights had been windy."
"Maybe cat better."

Chris glanced at the doorway again. Pretty smartass? Abruptly she smiled, looking pertly mischievous.
She went downstairs to Regan's bedroom, picked something up, brought it back to the attic, and then after a minute went back to her bedroon. Regan was sleeping. She returned her to her room, tucked her Into her bed, then went back to her own bedroom, turned off the television set and went to sleep.
The house was quiet until morning.
Eating her breakfast, Chris told Karl in an offhand way that she thought she'd heard a trap springing shut during the night.
"Like to go and take a look?" Chris suggested, sipping coffee and pretending to be engrossed in the morning paper. Without any comment, he went up to investigate.
Chris passed him in the hall on the second floor as he was returning, staring expressionlessly at the large stuffed mouse he was holding. He'd found it with its snout clamped tight in a trap.
As she walked toward her bedroom, Chris lifted an eyebrow at the mouse.
"Someone is funny," Karl muttered as he passed her. He returned the stuffed animal to Regan's bedroom.
"Sure a lot of things goin' on," Chris murmured, shaking her head as she entered her bedroom. She slipped off her robe and prepared to go to work. Yeah, maybe cat better, old buddy. Much better. Whenever she grinned, her entire face appeared to crinkle.

The filming went smoothly that day. Later in the morning, Sharon came by the set and during breaks

between scenes, in her portable dressing room, she and Chris handled items of business: a letter to her agent (she would think about the script); "okay" to the White House; a wire to Howard reminding him to telephone on Regan's birthday; a call to her business manager asking if she could afford to take off for a year; plans for a dinner party April twenty-third.

Early in the evening, Chris took Regan out to a movie, and the following day they drove around to points of interest in Chris's Jaguar XKE. The Lincoln Memorial. The Capitol. The cherry blossom lagoon. A bite to eat. Then across the river to Arlington Cemetery and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Regan turned solemn, and later, at the grave of John F. Kennedy, seemed to grow distant and a little sad. She stared at the "eternal flame" for a time; them mutely reached for Chris's hand. "Mom, why do people have to die?"

The question pierced her mother's soul. Oh, Rags, you too? You too? Oh, no! And yet what could she tell her? Lies? Slue couldn't. She looked at her daughter's upturned face, eyes misting with tears. Had she sensed her own thoughts? She had done it so often... so often before. "Honey, people get tired," she answered Regan tenderly.

"Why does God let them?"

For a moment, Chris stared. She was puzzled. Disturbed. An atheist, she had never taught Regan re-ligion. She thought it dishonest "Who's been telling you about God?" she asked.

"Sharon."

"Oh." She would have to speak to her.

"Mom, why does God let us get tired?"

Looking down at those sensitive eyes and that pain, Chris surrendered; couldn't tell her what she believed. "Well, after a while God gets lonesome for us, Rags. He wants us back."

Regan folded herself into silence. She stayed quiet during the drive home, and her mood persisted all the rest of the day and through Monday.

On Tuesday, Regan's birthday, it seemed to break. Chris took her along to the filming and when the shooting day was over, the cast and crew sang "Happy Birthday" and brought out a cake. Always a kind and gentle man when sober, Dennings had the lights rewarmed and filmed her as she cut it. He called it a "screen test," and afterwards promised to make her a star. She seemed quite gay.
But after dinner and the opening of presents, the mood seemed to fade. No word from Howard. Chris placed a call to him in Rome, and was told by a clerk at his hotel that he hadn't been there for several days and couldn't be reached. He was somewhere on a yacht.
Chris made excuses.
Regan nodded, subdued, and shook her head to her mother's suggestion that they go to the Hot Shoppe for a shake. Without a word, she went downstairs to the basement playroom, where she remained until time for bed.
The following morning when Chris opened her eyes, she found Regan in bed with her, half awake.
"Well, what in the What are you doing here?" Chris chuckled.
"My bed was shaking."
"You nut." Chris kissed her and pulled up her covers. "Go to sleep. It's still early."
What looked like morning was the beginning of endless night.

He stood at the edge of the lonely subway platform, listening for the rumble of a train that would still the ache that was always with him. Like his pulse. Heard only in silence. He shifted his bag to the other hand and stared down the tunnel. Points of light. They stretched into dark like guides to hopelessness.
A cough. He glanced to the left. The gray-stubbled derelict numb on the ground in a pool of his urine was sitting up. With yellowed eyes he stared at the priest with the chipped, sad face.
The priest looked away. He would come. He would whine. Couldjya help an old altar boy, Father? Wouldjya? The vomit-flaked hand pressing down on the shouder. The fumbling for the medal. The reeking of the breath of a thousand confessions with the wine and the garlic and the stale mortal sins belching out all together, and smothering smothering
The priest heard the derelict rising.
Don't come!
Heard a step.
Ah, my God, let me be!
"Hi ya, Faddah."
He winced. Sagged. Couldn't turn. He could not bear to search for Christ again in stench and hollow eyes; for the Christ of pus and bleeding excrement, the Christ who could not be. In absent gesture, he felt at his sleeve as if for an unseen band of mourning. He dimly remembered another Christ.
"Hey, Faddah!"

The hum of an incoming train. Then sounds of stumbling. He looked to the tramp. He was staggering. Fainting. With a blind, sudden rush. the priest was to him; caught him; dragged him to the bench against the wall.

"I'm a Cat'lic," the derelict mumbled. "I'm Cat'lic."

The priest eased him down; stretched him out; saw his train. He quickly pulled a dollar from out of his wallet and placed it in the pocket of the derelict's jacket. Then decided he would lose it. He plucked out the dollar and stuffed it into a urine-damp trouser pocket, then he picked up his bag and boarded the train.

He sat in a corner and pretended to sleep. At the end of the line he walked to Fordham University. The dollar had been meant for his cab.

When he reached the residence hall for visitors, he signed his name on the register. Damien Karras, he wrote. Then examined it. Something was wrong. Wearily he remembered and added, S.J.

He took a room in Weigel Hall and, after an hour, was able to sleep.

The following day he attended a meeting of the American Psychiatric Association. As principal speaker, he delivered a paper entitled "Psychological Aspects of Spiritual Development." At the end of the day, he enjoyed a few drinks and a bite to eat with some other psychiatrists. They paid. He left them early. He would have to see his mother.

He walked to the crumbling brownstone apartment building on Manhattan's East Twenty-first Street. Pausing by the steps that led up to the door, he eyed the children on the stoop. Unkempt. Ill-clothed. No place to go. He remembered evictions: humiliations: -walking home with a seventh-grade sweetheart and encountering his mother as she hopefully rummaged through a garbage can on the corner. He climbed the steps and opened the door as if it were a tender wound. An odor like cooking. Like rotted sweetness. He remembered the visits to Mrs. Ghoirelli and her tiny apartment with the eighteen cats. He gripped the banister and climbed, overcome by a sudden, draining weariness that he knew was caused by guilt. He should never have left her. Not alone.

Her greeting was joyful A shout. A kiss. She rushed to make coffee. Dark. Stubby, gnarled legs. He sat in the kitchen and listened to her talk, the dingy walls and soiled floor seeping into his bones. The apartment was a hovel. Social Security. Each month, a few dollars from a brother.

She sat at the table. Mrs. This. Uncle That. Still in immigrant accents. He avoided those eyes that were wells of sorrow, eyes that spent days staring out of a window.

He should never have left her.

He wrote a few letters for her later. She could neither read nor write any English Then he spent time repairing the tuner on a crackling, plastic radio. Her world. The news. Mayor Lindsay.

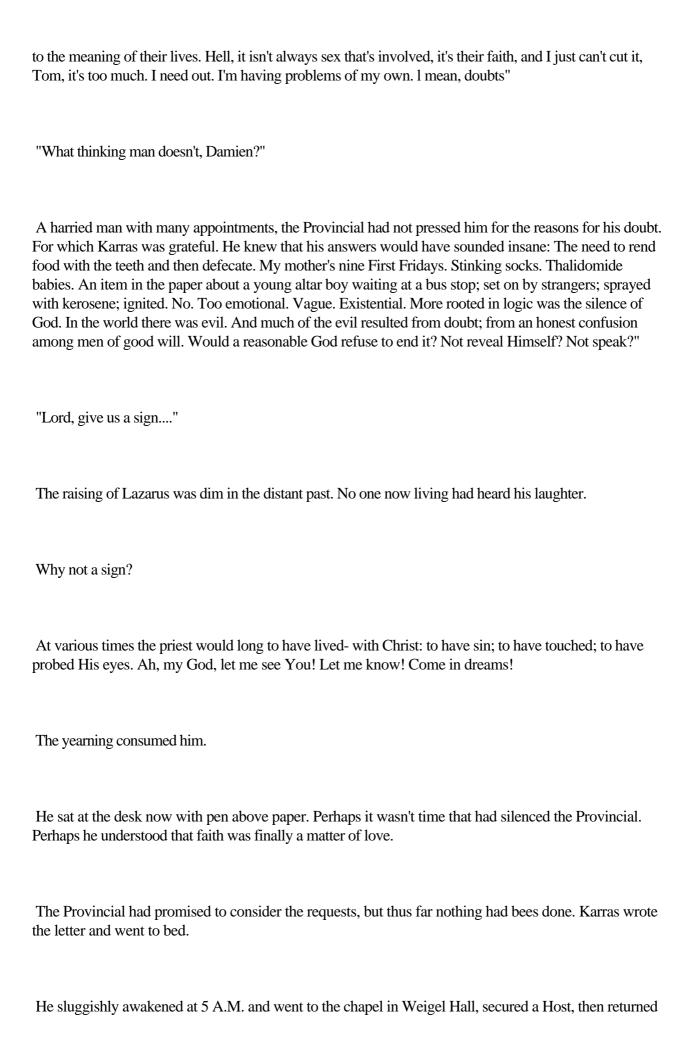
He went to the bathroom. Yellowing newspaper spread on the tile. Stains of rust in the tub and the sink. On the floor, an old corset. Seeds of vocation. From these he had fled into love. Now the love had grown cold. In the night, he heard it whistling through the chambers of his heart like a lost, crying wind.

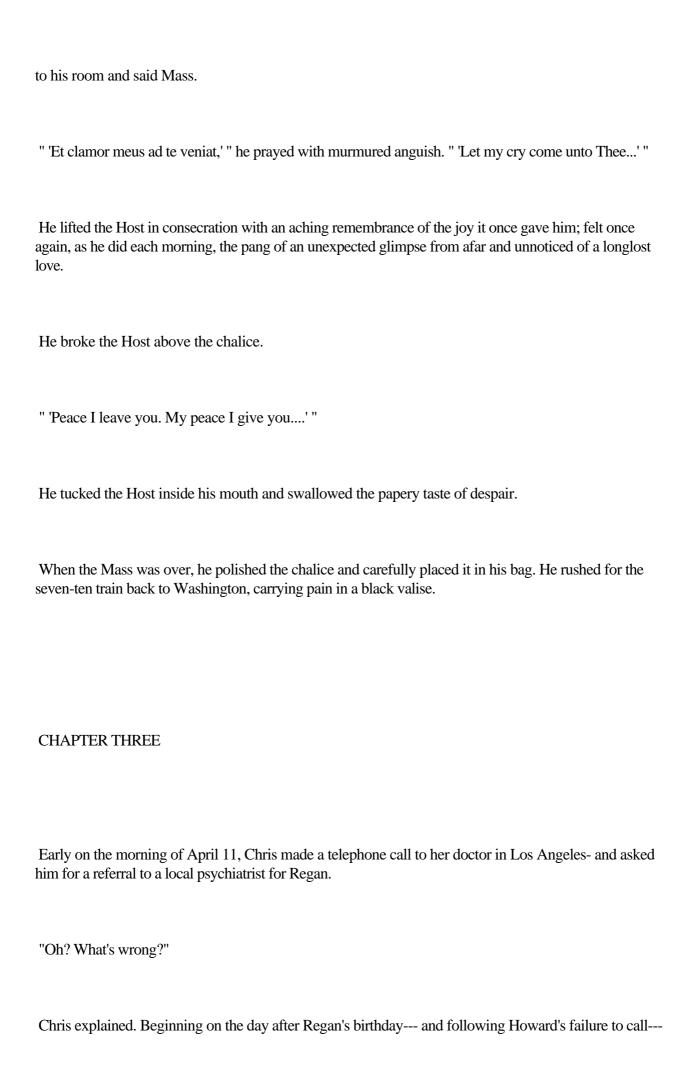
At a quarter to eleven, he kissed her good-bye; promised to return jest as soon as he could. He left with the radio tuned to the news.

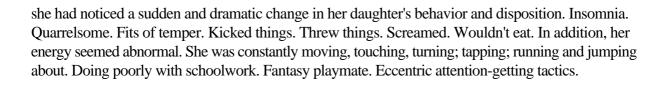
Once back in his room in Weigel Hall, he gave some thought to writing a letter to the Jesuit head of the Maryland province. He'd covered the ground with him once before: request for a transfer to the New York province in order to be loser to his mother; request for a teaching post and relief from his duties. In requesting the latter, he'd cited as a reason "unfitness" for the work.

The Maryland Provincial had taken it up with him during the course of his annual inspection tour of Georgetown University, a function that closely paralleled that of an army inspector general in the granting of confidential hearings to those who had grievances or complaints. On the point of Damien Karras' mother, the Provicial had nodded and expressed his symphathy; but the question of the priest's "unfitness" he thought contradictory on its face. But Karras had pursued it:

"Well, it's more than psychiatry, Torn. You know that. Some of their problems come down to vocation,







"Such as what?" the physician inquired.

She started with the rappings. Since the night she'd investigated the attic, she'd heard them again on two occasions. In both of these instances, she'd noticed, Regan was present in the room; and the rappings would tease at the moment Chris entered. Secondly, she told him, Regan would "lose" things in the room: a dress; her toothbrush; books; her shoes. She com-plained about "somebody moving" her furniture. Finally, on the morning following the dinner at the White House, Chris saw Karl in Regan's bedroom pulling a bureau back into place from a spot that was halfway across the room. When Chris had inquired what he was doing, he repeated his former "Someone is funny," and refused to elaborate any further, but shortly thereafter Chris had found Regan in the kitchen complaining that someone had moved all her furniture during the night when she was sleeping.

This was the incident, Chris explained, that had finally crystallized her suspicions. It was clearly her daughter who was doing it all.

"You mean somnambulism? She's doing it in her sleep?"

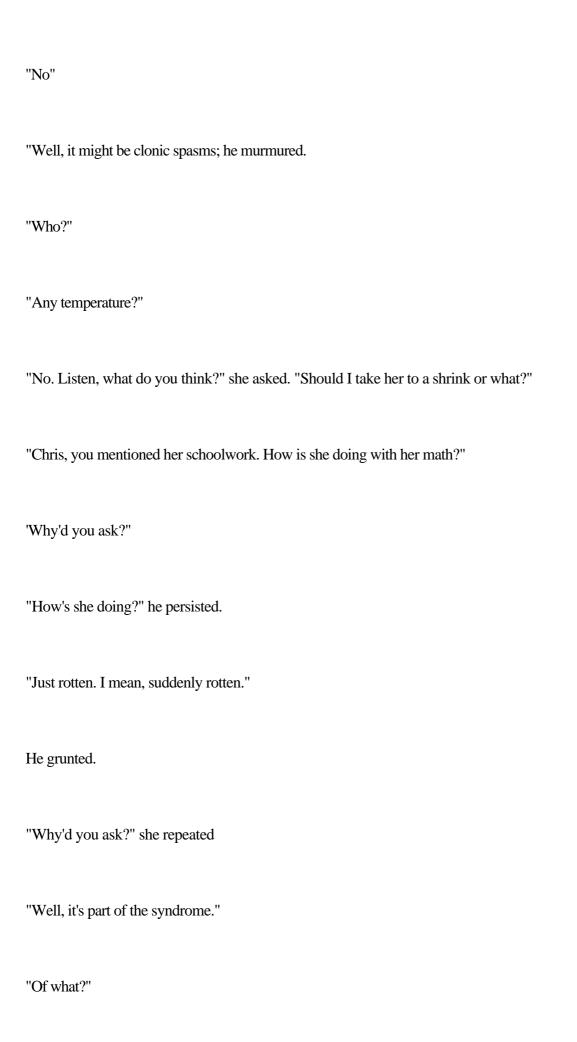
"No, Marc, she's doing it when she's awake. To get attention."

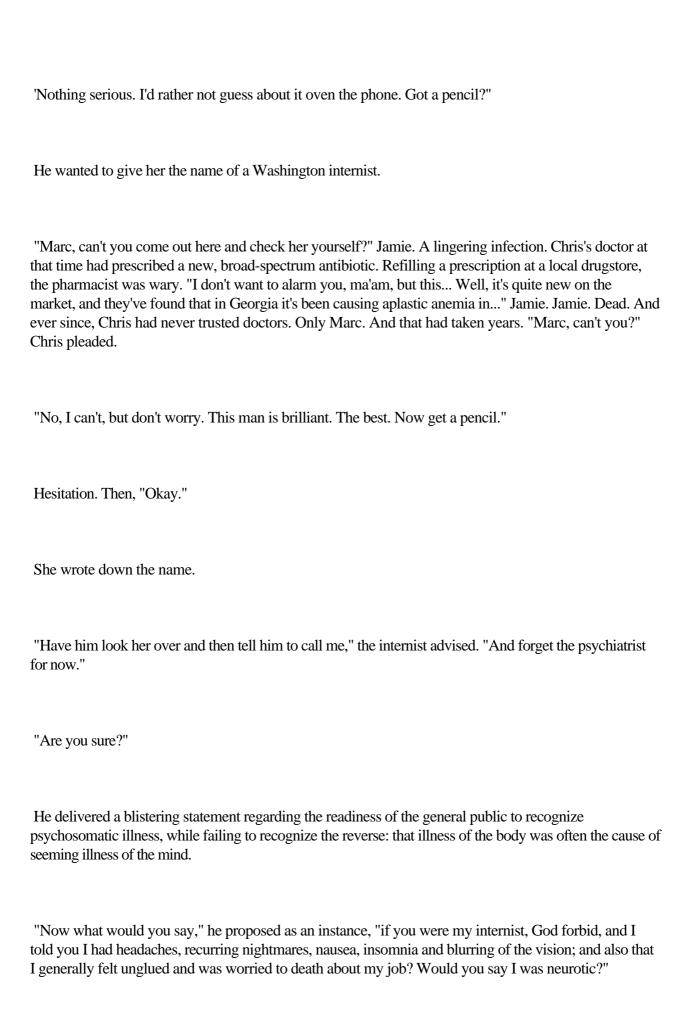
Chris mentioned the matter of the shaking bed, Which had happened twice more and was always followed by Regan's insistence that she sleep with her mother.

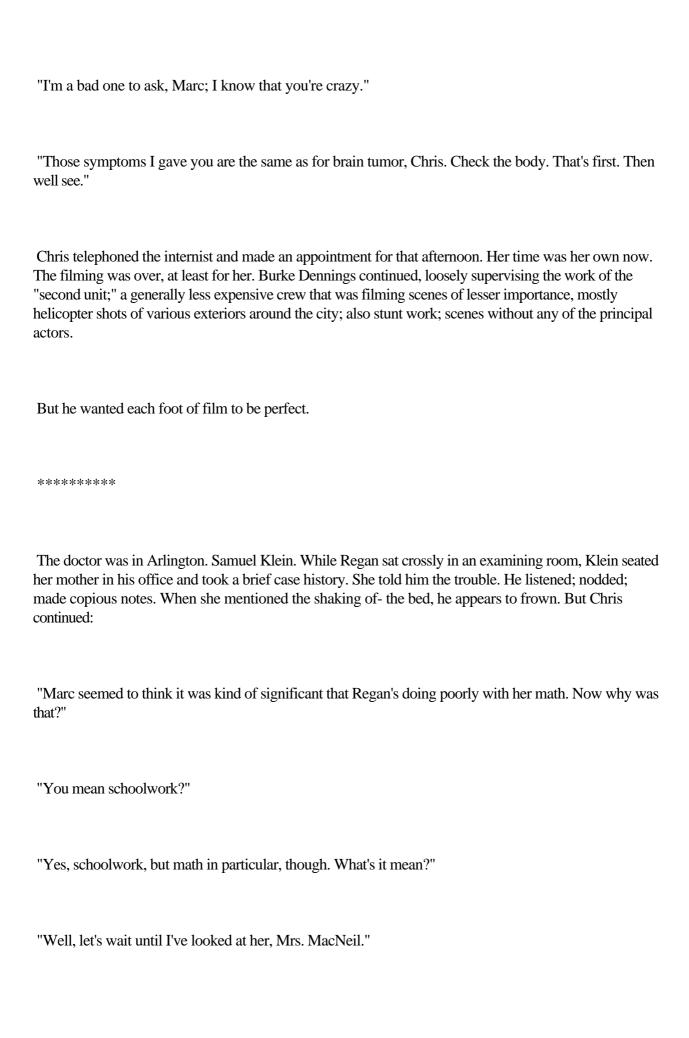
"Well, that could be physical," the internist ventured.

"No, Marc, I didn't say the bed is shaking. I said that she says that it's shaking."

"Do you know that it isn't shaking?"

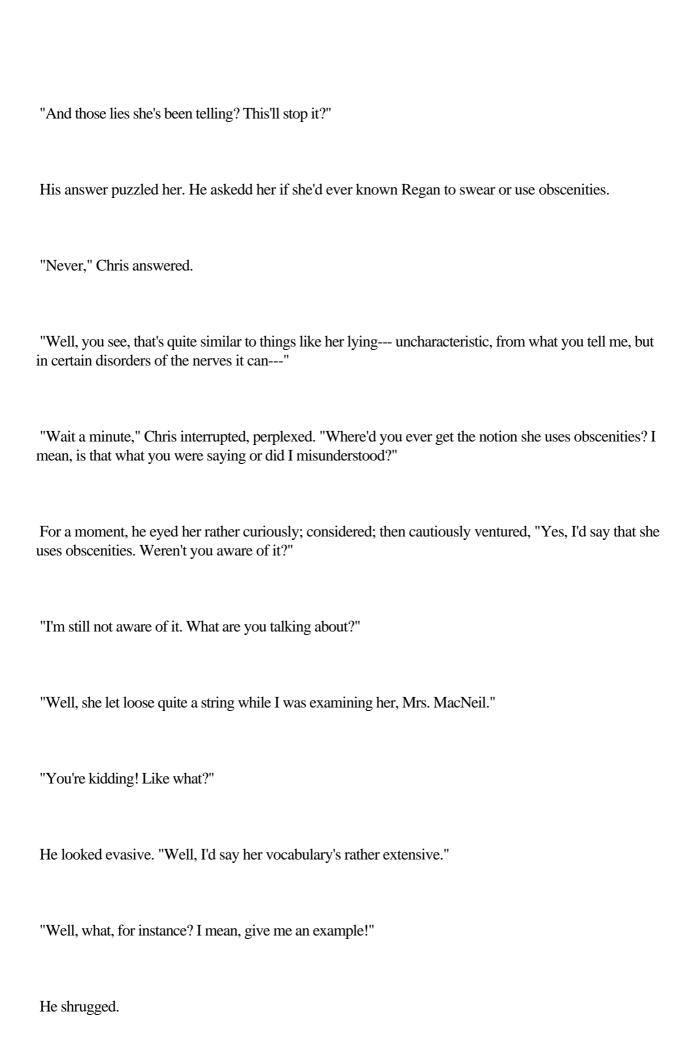






He then excused himself and gave Regan a complete examination that included taking samples of urine and her blood. The urine was for testing of her liver and kidney functions; the blood for a number of checks: diabetes; thyroid function; red-cell blood count looking for possible anemia, White-cell blood count looking for exotic diseases of the blood.
After he finished, he sat for a while and talked to Regan, observing her demeanor, and then returned to Chris and started writing a prescription.
"She appears to have a hyperkinetic behavior disorder."
"A what?"
"A disorder of the nerves. At least We think it is. We don't know yet exactly hgw it works, but its often seen in early adolescence. She shows all the symptoms: the hyperactivity; the temper; her performance ir math."
"Yeah, the math. Why the math?"
"It affects concentration." He ripped the prescription from the small blue pad and handed it over, "Now this is for Ritalin."
"What?"
"Methylphenidate."
"Oh."
"Ten milligrams, twice a day, I'd recommend one at eight A.M., and the other at two in the afternoon."

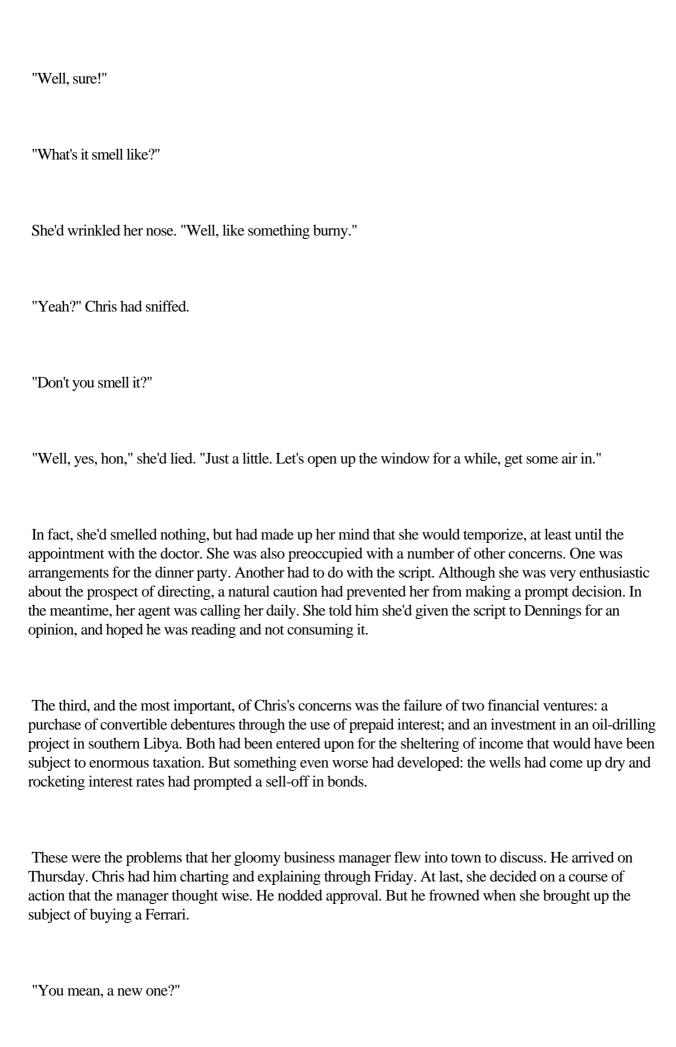


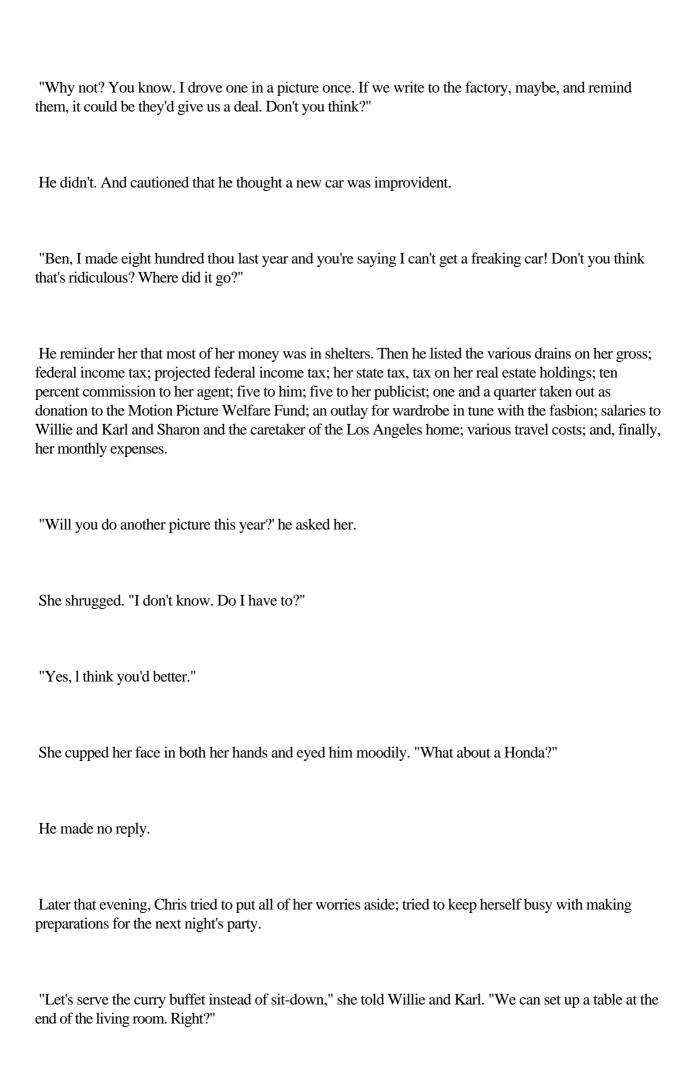
















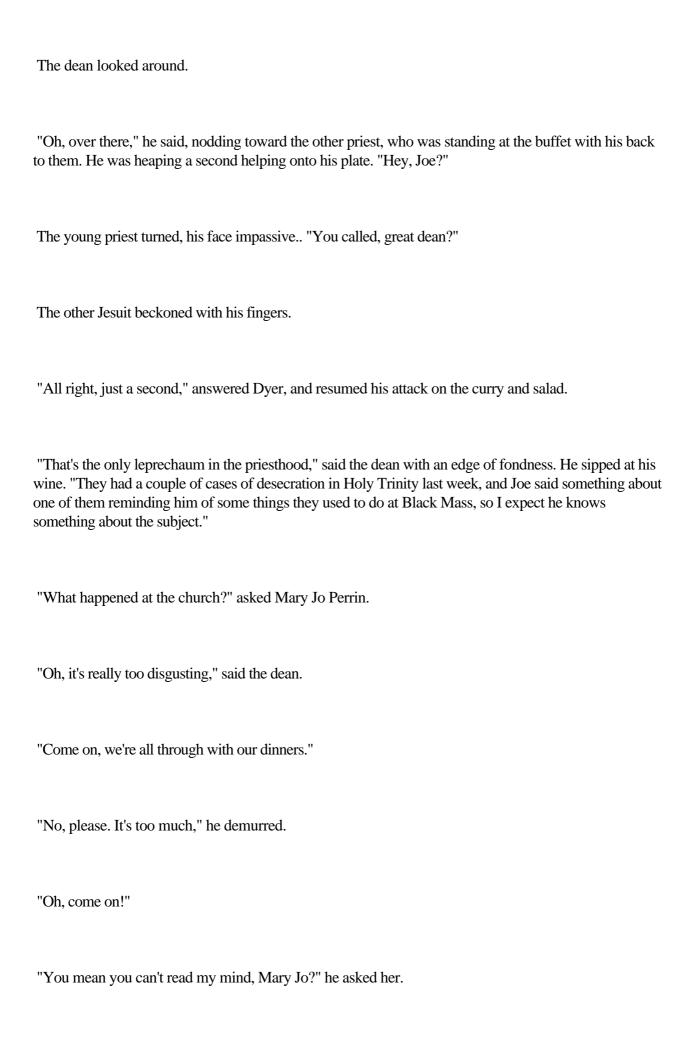
Regan. Sho	ing and preparations at an end, Chris again found herself turning worried thoughts toward e tried to watch television. Could not concentrate. Felt uneasy. There was a strangeness in the e settling stillness. Weighted dust.
By midnig	ght, all in the house were asleep.
There wer	re no disturbances. That night.
СНАРТЕ	R FOUR
_	ed her guests in a lime-green hostess costume with long, belled sleeves and pants. Her shoes fortable. They reflected her hope far the evening.
pink-faced the door, h	o arrive was Mary Jo Perrin, who came with Robert, her teen-age son. The last was Father Dyer. He was young and diminutive, with fey eyes behind steel-rimmed spectacles. At e apologized for his lateness. "Couldn't find the right necktie," he told Chris expressionlessly. nent, she stared at him blankly, then burst into laughter. Her day-long depression began to lift.
	s did their work. By a quarter to ten, they were scattered about the living room eating their vibrant knots of conversation.
sofa with F and a dry,	d her plate from the steaming buffet and scanned the room for Mary Jo Perrin. There. On a Father Wagner, the Jesuit dean. Chris had spoken to him briefly. He had a bald, freckled scalp soft manner. Chris drifted to the sofa and folded to the floor in front of the coffee table as the ackled with mirth.
"Oh, come	e on, Mary Jo!" the dean said, smiling as he lifted a forkful of curry to his mouth.



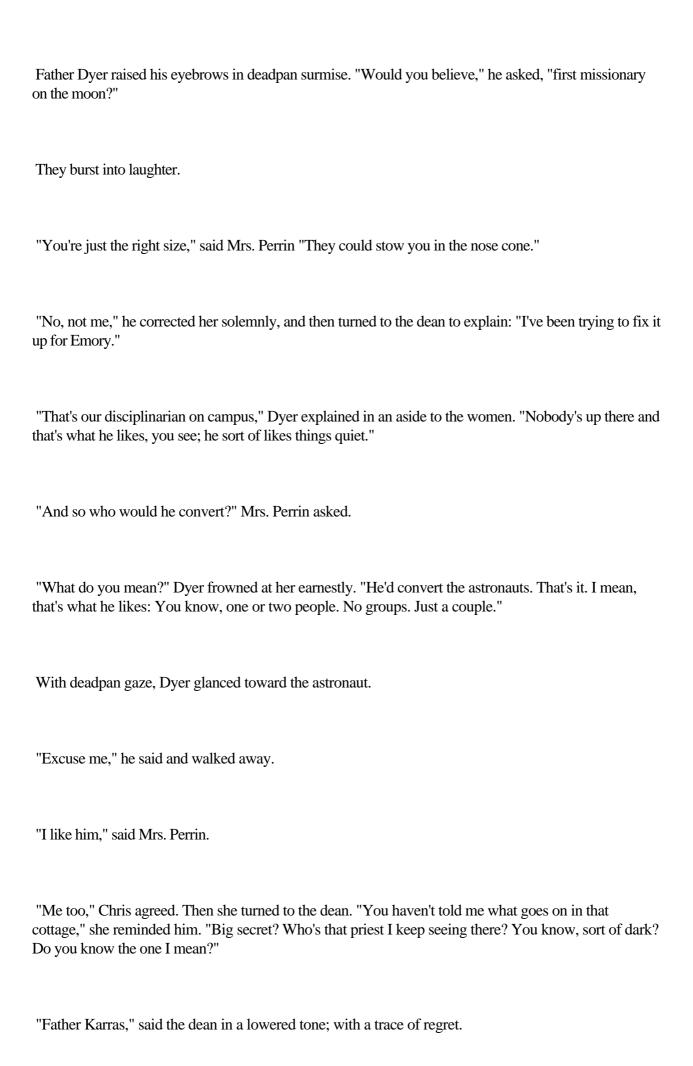


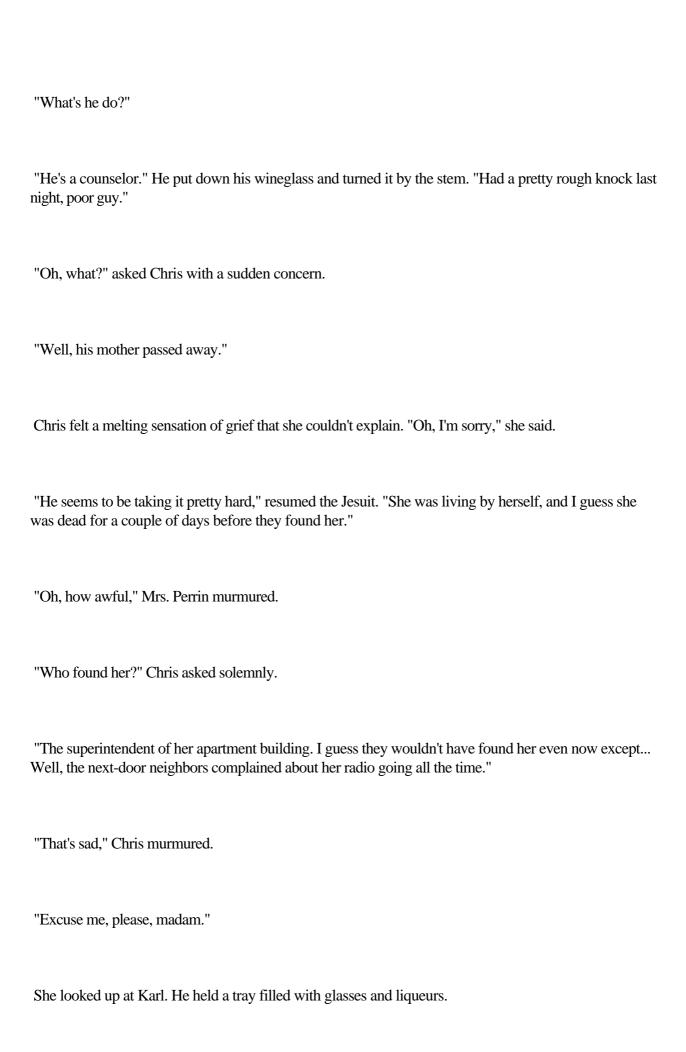






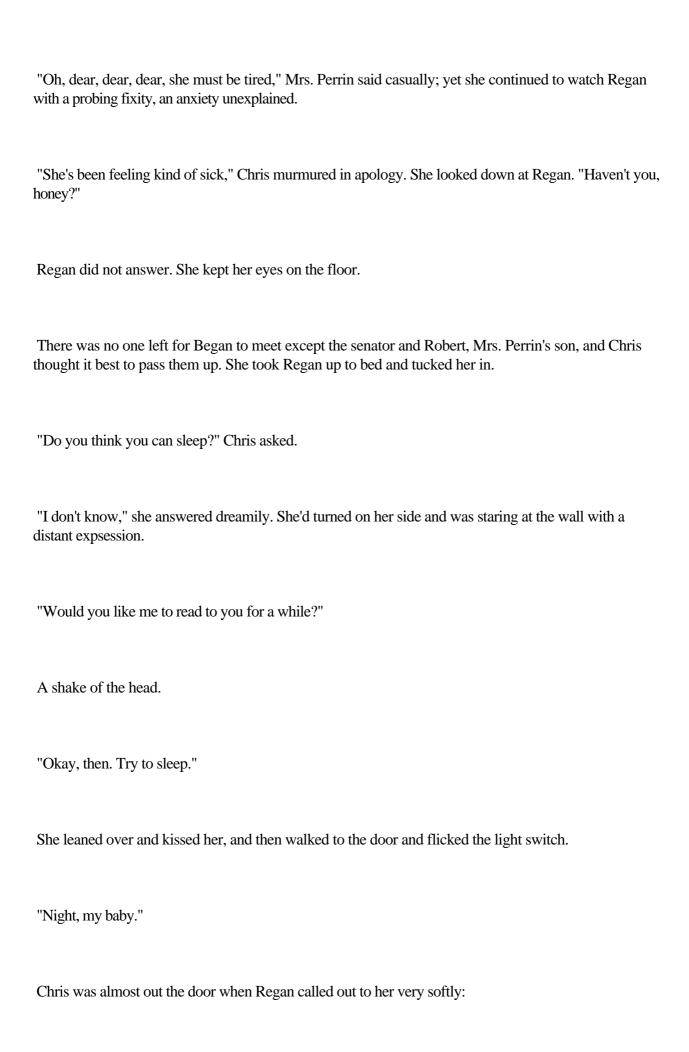




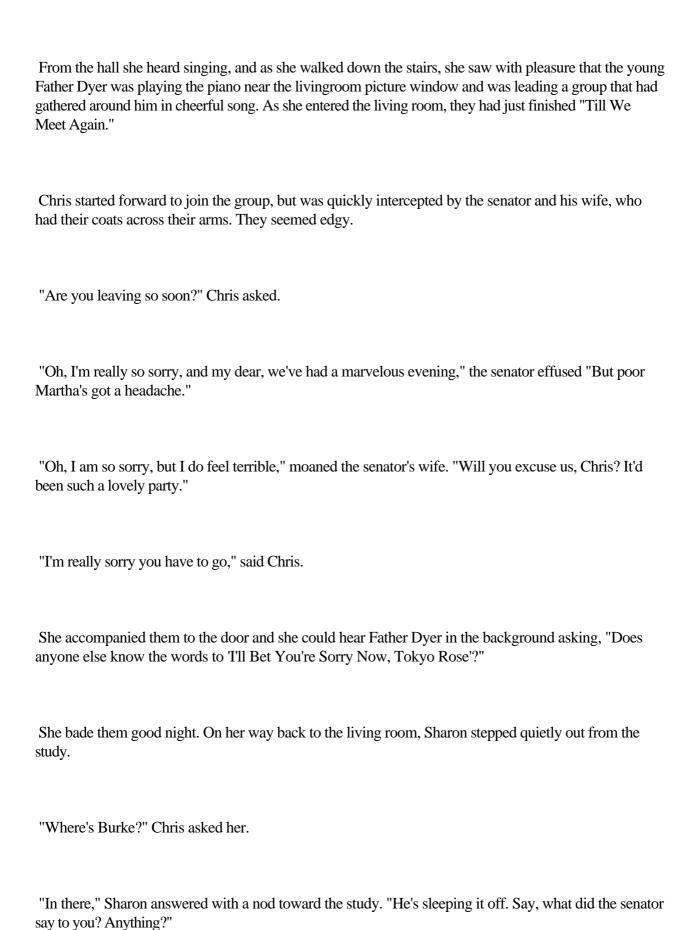


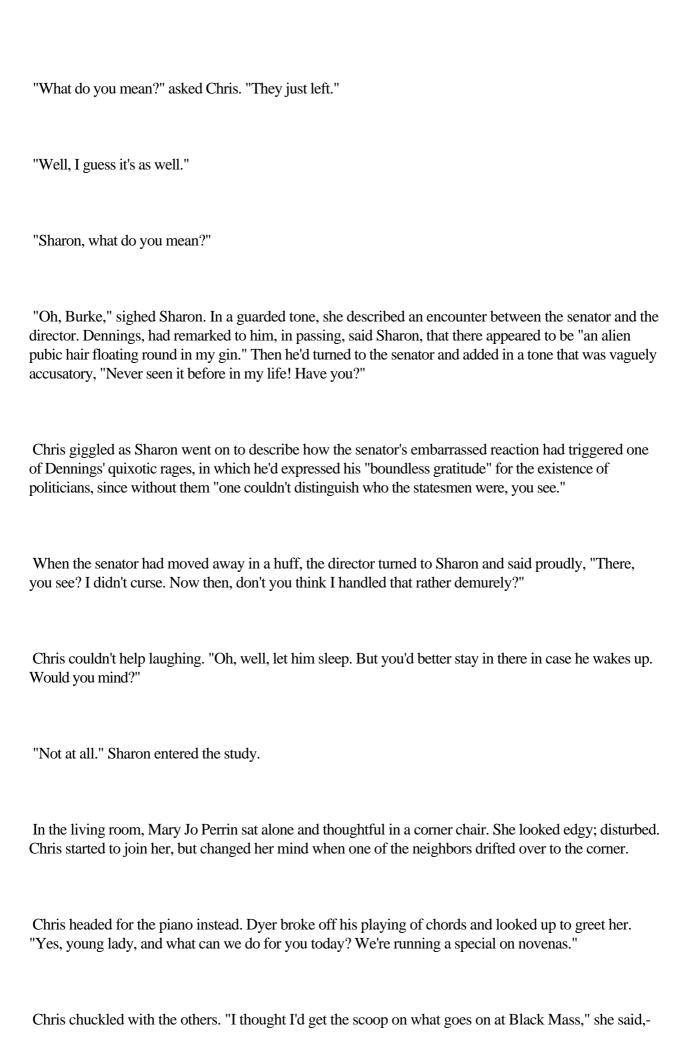
"Sure, set it down here, Karl, that'll be fine." Chris liked to serve the liqueurs to her guests herself. It added an intimacy, she felt, that might otherwise be lacking. "Well, let's see now, I'll start with you," she told the dean and Mrs. Perrin; and served them. Then she moved about the room, taking orders and fetching for each of her guests, and by the time she had made the rounds, the various clusters had shifted to new combinations, except for Dyer and the astronaut, who seemed to be getting thicker. "No, I'm really not a priest," Chris heard Dyer say solemnly, his arm on the astronaut's chuckle-heaved shoulder. "I'm actually a terribly avant-garde rabbi." And not long after, she overheard Dyer inquiring of the astronaut. "What is space?" and when the astronaut shrugged and said he really didn't know, Father Dyer had fixed him with an earnest frown and said, "You should." Chris was standing with Ellen Cleary afterward, reminiscing about Moscow, when she heard a familiar, strident voice ringing angrily through from the kitchen. Oh, Jesus! Burke! He was shricking obscenities at someone. Chris excused herself and went quickly to the kitchen, where Dennings was railing viciously at Karl while Sharon made futile attempts to hush him. "Burke!" exclaimed Chris. "Knock it off!" The director ignored her, continued to rage, the corners of his mouth flecked foamy with saliva, while Karl leaned mutely against the sink with folded arms and stolid expression, his eyes fixed unwaveringly on Dennings. "Karl!" Chris snapped. 'Will you get out of here? Get out! Can't you see how he is?"

But the Swiss would not budge until Chris began actually to shove him toward the door.
"Naa-zi pig!" Dennings screamed at his back. And then he turned genially to Chris and rubbed his hands together. "What's dessert?" he asked mildly.
"Dessert!" Chris thumped at her brow with the heel of her hand.
"Well, I'm hungry," he whined.
Chris turned to Sharon. "Feed him! I've got to get Regan up to Bed. And, Burke, for chrissakes," she asked the director, "will you behave yourself! There are priests out there!" She pointed.
He creased his brow as his eyes grew intense with- a sudden and apparently genuine interest. "Oh, you noticed that too?" he asked without guile.
Chris left the kitchen and went down to check Regan in the basement playroom, where her daughter had spent the entire day. She found her playing with the Ouija board. She seemed sullen; abstracted; remote. Well, at least she isn't feisty, Chris reflected and hopeful of diverting her, shee brought her to the living room and began to introduce her to her guests.
"Oh, isn't she darling!" said the wife of the senator.
Regan was strangely well behaved, except for a moment with Mrs. Perrin when she would neither speak nor accept her hand. But the seeress made a joke of it.
"Knows I'm a fake," She winked at Chris. But then, with a curious air of scrutiny, she reached forward and gripped Regan's hand with a gentle pressure, as if checking her pulse. Regan quickly shook her off and glared malevolently.



"Mother, what's wrong with me?"
So haunted. The tone so despairing. So disproportionate to her condition. For a moment the mother felt shaken and confused. But quickly she righted herself.
"Well, it's just like I said, hon; it's nerves. All you need is those pills for a couple of weeks and I know you'll be feeling just fine. Now then, try to go to sleep, hon, okay?"
No response. Chris waited.
"Okay?" she repeated.
"Okay," whispered Regan.
Chris abruptly noticed goose pimples rising on her forearm. She rubbed it. Good Christ, it gets cold in this room. Where's the draft coming in from?
She moved to the window and checked along the edges. Found nothing. Turned to Regan. "'You warm enough, baby?"
No answer.
Chris moved to the bedside. "Regan? You asleep?" she whispered.
Eyes closed. Deep breathing.
Chris tiptoed from the room.









Ellen Cleary shook her head and walked away. "This is getting too creepy for me." She smiled thinly.

Chris paid her no notice. The dean joined the group unobtrusively. "But how can you know that?" she asked the young Jesuit. "Even if there was such a thing as Black Mass, who's to say what went on there?"

"Well, I guess they got most of it," answered Dyer, "from the people who were caught and then confessed."

"Oh, come on," said the dean. "Those confessions were worthless, Joe. They were tortured."

"No, only the snotty ones," Dyer said blandly.

There was a ripple of vaguely nervous laughter. The dean eyed his watch. "Well, I really should be going," he said to Chris. "I've got the six-o'clock Mass in Dahlgren Chapel."

"I've got the banjo Mass." Dyer beamed. Then his eyes shifted to a point in the room behind Chris, and he sobered abruptly. "Well, now, I thick we have a visitor, Mrs. MacNeil," he cautioned, motioning with his head.

Chris turned. And gasped on seeing Regal in her nightgown, urinating gushingly onto the rug. Staring fixedly at the astronaut, she intoned in a lifeless voice, "You're going to die up there."

"Oh, my God!" cried Chris in pain, rushing to her daughter. "Oh, God, oh, my baby, oh, come on, come with me!"

She took Regan by the arms and led her quickly away with a tremulous apology over her shoulder to the ashen astronaut: "Oh, I'm so sorry! She's been sick, she must be walking in her sleep! She's didn't know what she was saying!"

"Gee, maybe we should go," she heard Dyer say to someone.

"No, no, stay," Chris protested, turning around for a moment. "Please, stay! It's okay! I'll be back in just a minute!"

Chris paused by the kitchen, instructing Willie to see to the rug before the stain became indelible, and then she walked Regan upstairs to her bates bathroom, bathed her and changed her nightgown. "Honey, why did you say that?" Chris asked her repeatedly, but Regan appeared not to understand and mumbled non sequiturs. Her eyes were vacant and clouded.

Chris tucked her into bed, and almost immediately Regan appeared to fall asleep. For a time Chris waited, listening to her breathing. Then left the room.

At the bottom of the stairs, she encountered Sharon and the young director of the second unit assisting Dennings out of the study. They had called a cab and were going to shepherd him back to his suite at the Sheraton-Park.

"Take it easy," Chris advised as they left the house with Dennings between them.

Barely conscious, the director said, "Fuck it," and slipped into fog and the waiting cab.

Chris returned to the living room, where the guests who still remained expressed their sympathy as she gave them a brief account of Regan's illness. When she mentioned the rappings and the other "attention-getting" phenomena, Mrs. Perrin stared at her intently. Once Chris looked at her, expecting her to comment, but she said nothing and Chris continued.

"Does she walk in her sleep quite a bit?" asked Dyer.

"No, tonight's the first time. Or at least, the first time I know of, so I guess it's this hyperactivity thing. Don't you think?"

"Oh, I really wouldnt know," said the priest. "I've heard sleepwalking's common at puberty, except

that---" Here he shrugged and broke off. "I don't know. Guess you'd better ask your doctor."

Throughout the remainder of the discussion, Mrs. Perrin sat quietly, watching the dance of flames in the living room fireplace: Almost as subdued, Chris noticed, was the astronaut, who was scheduled for a flight to the moon within the year. He stared at his drink with a now-and-then grunt meant to signify interest and attention. As if by tacit understanding, no one made reference to what Regan had said to him.

"Well, I do have that Mass" said the dean at last, rising to leave.

It triggered a general departure. They all stood up and expressed their thanks for dinner and the evening.

At the door, Father Dyer took Chris's hand and probed her eyes earnestly. "Do you think there's a part in one of your movies for a very short priest who can play the piano?" he asked.

"Well, if there isn't"--- Chris laughed--- "then I'll have one written in for you, Father."

"I was thinking of my brother," he told her solemnly.

"Oh, you!" she laughed again, and bade him a fond and warm good night.

The last to leave were Mary Jo Perrin and her son. Chris held them at the door with idle chatter. She had the feeling that Mary Jo had something on her mind, but was holding it back. To delay her departure, Chris asked her opinion on Regan's continued use of the Quija board and her Captain Howdy fixation. "Do you think there's any harm in it?" she asked.

Expecting an airily perfunctory dismissal. Chris was surprised when Mrs. Perrin frowned and looked down at the doorstep. She seemed to be thinking, and stll in this posture, she stepped outside and joined her son, who was waiting on the stoop.

When at last she lifted her head, her eyes were in shadow.



some sort. Oh, not to the spirit world, perhaps; you don't believe in that. Perhaps, then, a door in what you call the subconsious. I don't know. All I know is that things seem to happen. And, my dear, there are

lunatic asylums all over the world filled with people why dabbled in the occult."

There was momentary silence. Then again the soft voice began droning out of darkness. "There was a family in Bavaria, Chris, in nineteen twenty-one. I -don't remember the name, but they were a family of eleven. You could check it in the newspapers, I suppose. Just a short time following an attempt at a séance, they went out of their minds. All of them. All eleven. They went on a burning spree in their house, and when they'd finished with the furniture, they started on the three-month-old baby of one of the younger daughters. And that is when the neighbors broke in and stopped them.

"The entire family," she ended, "was put in an asylum."

"Oh, boy!" breathed Chris as she thought of Captain Howdy. He had now assumed a menacing coloration. Mental illness. Was that it? Something. "I knew I should take her to see a psychiatrist!"

"Oh, for heaven sakes," said Mrs. Perrin, stepping into the light, "you never mind about me; you just listen to your doctor." There was attempted reassurance in her voice that was not convincing. "I'm great at the future"--- Mrs. Perrin smiled--- "but in the present I'm absolutely helpless." She was fumbling in her purse. "Now then, where are my glasses? There, you see? I've mislaid them. Oh, here they are right here." She had found them in a pocket of her coat. "Lovely home," she remarked as she put on the glasses and glanced up at the upper facade of the house. "Gives a feeling of warmth."

"God almighty, I'm relieved! For a second, there, I thought you were going to tell me it's haunted!"

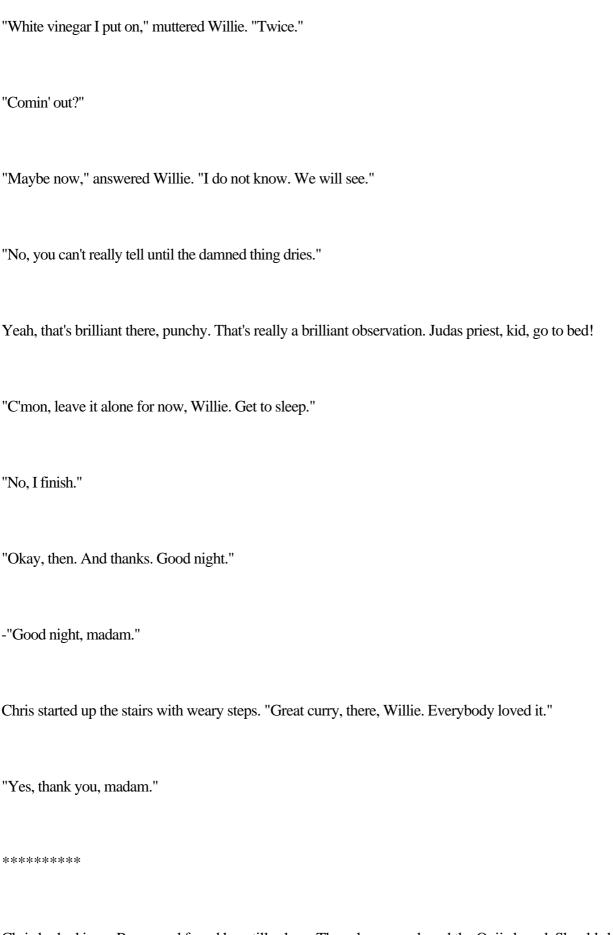
Mrs. Perrin glanced down to her. "Why would I tell you a thing like that?"

Chris was thinking of a friend, a noted actress in Beverly Hills who had sold her home because of her insistence that it was inhabited by a poltergeist. "I -don't' know." She grinned wanly. "On account of who you are, I guess. I was kidding."

"It's a very fine house," Mrs. Perrin reassured her in an even tone. "I've been here before, you know; many times."

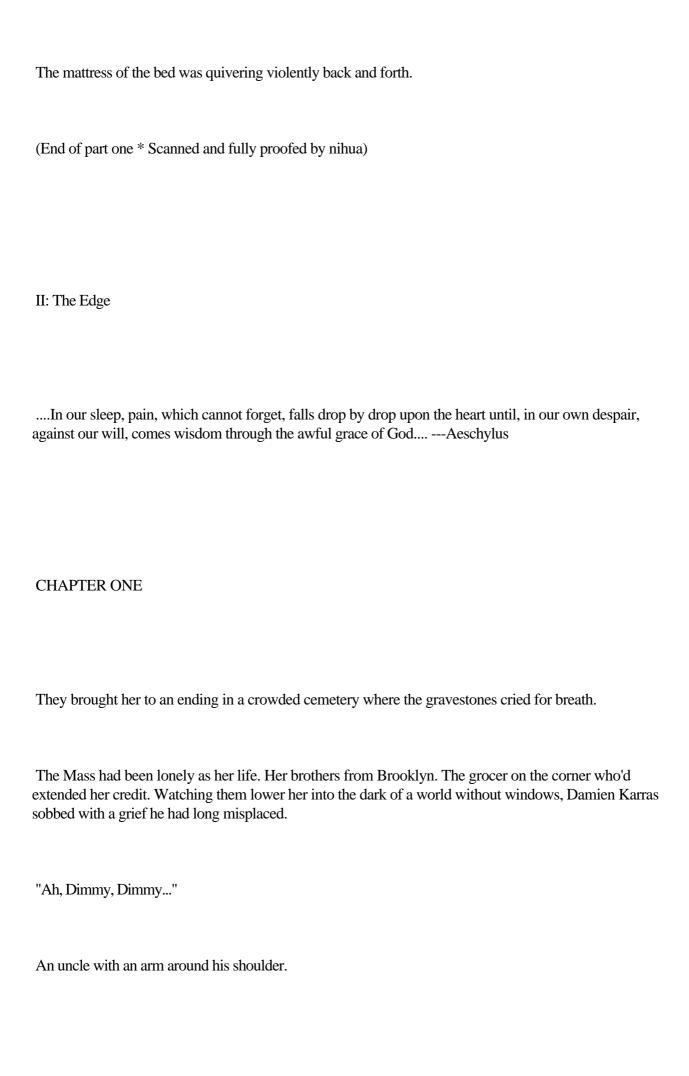
"Have yogi really?"

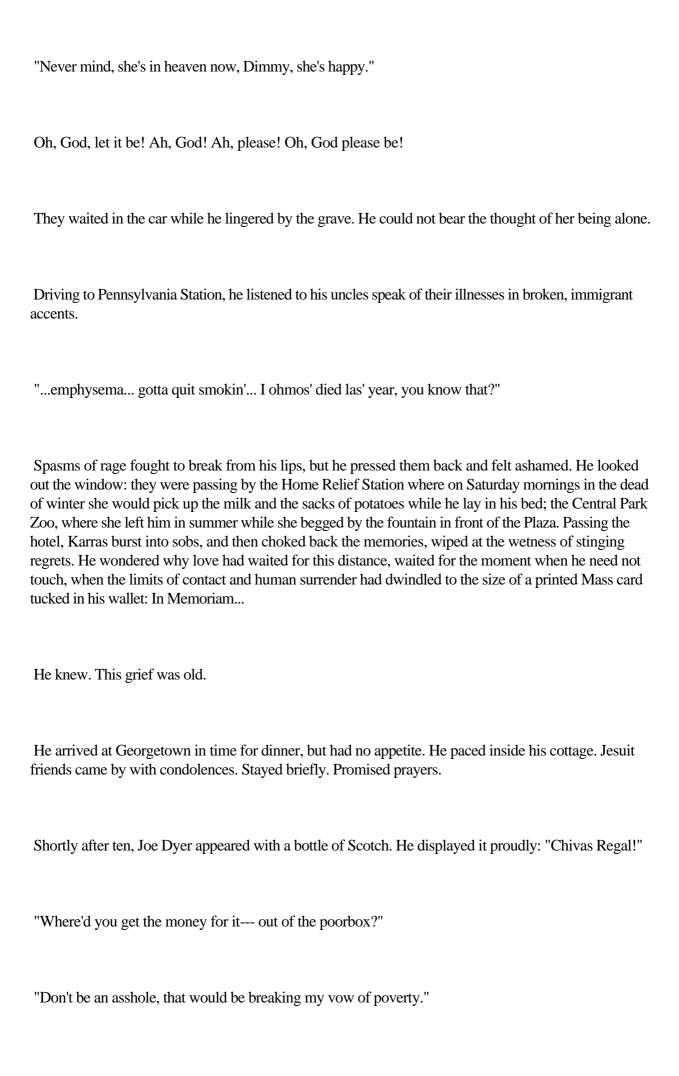


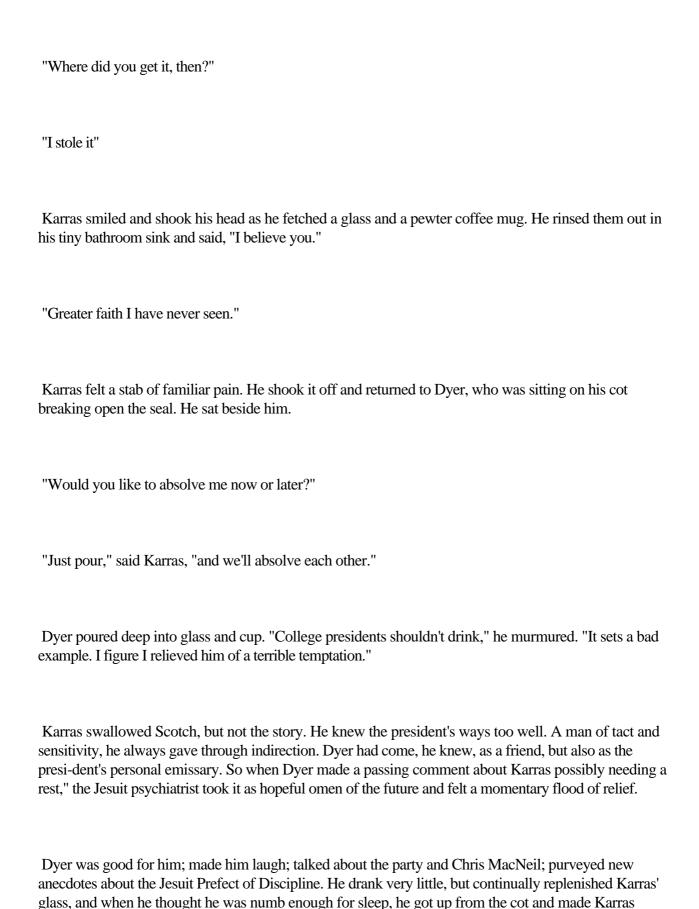


Chris looked in on Regan and found her still asleep. Then she remembered the Ouija board. Should she hide it? Throw it away? Boy, Perrin's really dingy when it comes to that stuff. Yet Chris was aware that the fantasy playmate was morbid and unhealthy. Yeah, maybe I should chuck it.

Still, Chris was hesitant. Standing by the bedside and looking at Regan, she remembered an incident when her daughter was only three: the night that Howard had decided she was much too old to continue to sleep with her baby bottle, on which she had grown dependent. He'd taken it away from her that night, and Regan had screamed until four in the morning, then acted hysterical for days. And now Chris feared a similar reaction. Better wait until I talk it all out with a shrink. Moreover, the Ritalin, she reflected, hadn't had a chance to take effect.
At the last, she decided to wait and see.
Chris retired to her room, settled wearily into bed, and almost instantly fell asleep. Then awakened to fearful, hysterical screaming at the rim of her consciousness.
"Mother, come here, come here, I'm afraid!"
"Yes, I'm coming, all right, hon, I'm coming!"
Chris raced down the hall to Regan's bedroom. Whimpering. Crying. Sounds like bedsprings.
"Oh, my baby, what's wrong?" Chris exclaimed as she reached out and flicked on the lights.
Good Christ almighty!
Regan lay taut on her back, face stained with tears and contorted with terror as she gripped at the sides of her narrow bed.
"Mother, why is it shaking?" she cried. "Make it stop! Oh, I'm scared! Make it stop! Mother, Please make it stop!"





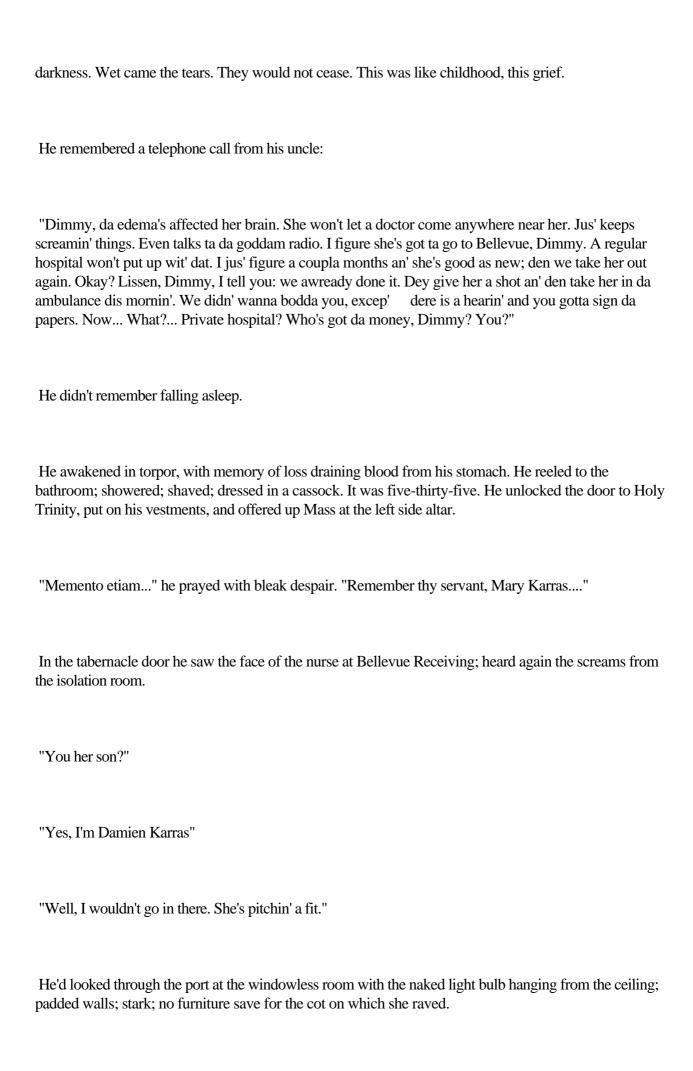


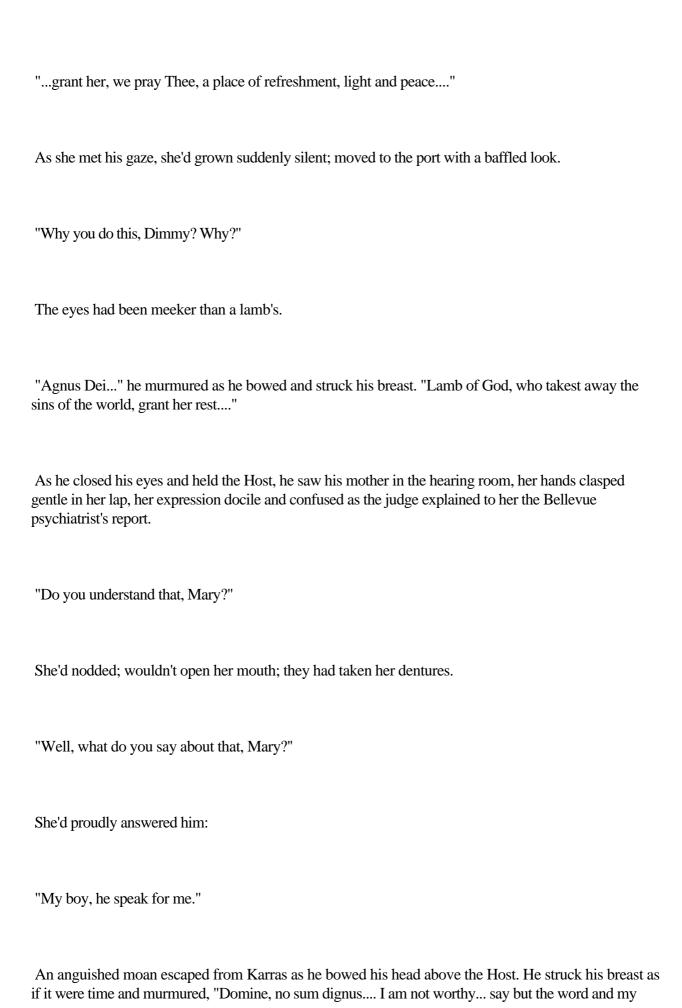
stretch out, while he sat at the desk and continued to talk until Karras' eyes were closed and his

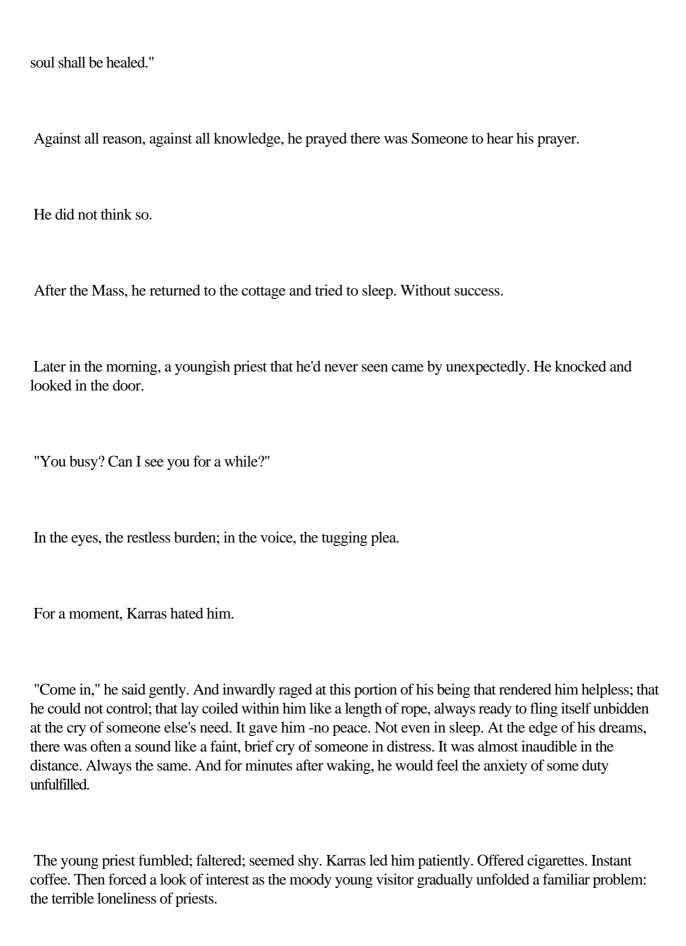
comments were mumbled grunts.



He waited for his sobbing to subside, and then fumbled for the Scotch. He sat on the cot and drank in







Of all the anxieties that Karras encountered among the community, this one had lately become the must prevalent. Cut off from their families as well as from women, many of the Jesuits were also fearful of expressing affection for fellow priests; of forming deep and loving friendships.

"Like I'd like to put my arm around another guy's shoulder, but right away I'm scared he's going to think I'm queer. I mean, you hear all these theories about so many latents attracted to the priesthood. So I just don't do it. I won't even go to somebody's room just to listen to records; or talk; or smoke. It's not that I'm afraid of him; I'm just worried about him getting worried about me."

Karras felt the weight easing slowly from the other and onto him. He let it come; let the young priest talk. his knew he would return again and again; find relief from aloneness; make Karras his friend; and when he'd realized he had done so without fear and suspicion, perhaps he would go on to make friends among the others.

The psychiatrist grew weary; found himself drifting into private sorrow. He glanced at a plaque that someone had given him the previous Christmas. MY BROTHER HURTS. I SHARE HIS PAIN. I MEET GOD IN HIM, he read. A failed encounter. He blamed himself. He had mapped the streets of his brother's torment, yet never had walked them; or so he believed. He thought that the pain which he felt was his own.

At last the visitor looked at his watch. It was time for lunch in the campus refectory. He rose and started to leave. Then paused to glance at a current novel on Karras' desk.

"Have you read it?" asked Karras.

The other shook his head. "No, I haven't. Should I?"

"I don't know. I just finished it and I'm not at all sure that I really understand it," Karras lied. He picked up the book and handed it over. "Want to take along? You know, I'd really like to hear someone else's opinion."

"Well, sure," said the Jesuit, examining the copy on the flap of the dust jacket. "I'll try to get it back to you in a couple of days."

His mood seemed brighter.

As the screen door creaked with his departure, Karras felt momentary peace. He picked up his breviary and stepped out to the courtyard, where he slowly paced and said his Office.
In the afternoon, he had still another visitor, the elderly pastor of Holy Trinity, who took a chair by the desk and offered condolences on the passing of Karras' mother.
"Said a couple of Masses for her, Damien. And one for you," he wheezed with the barest trace of a brogue.
"That was thoughtful of you, Father. Thank you very much."
"How old was she?"
"Seventy."
"A good old age."
Karras fixed his gaze on an altar card that the pastor had carried in with him. One of three employed in the Mass, it was covered in plastic and inscribed with a portion of the prayers that were said by the priest. The psychiatrist wondered what he was doing with it.
"Well, Damien, we've had another one of those things here today. In the church, y'know. Another desecration."
A statue of the Virgin at the back of the church had been painted like a harlot, the pastor told him. Then he handed the altar card to Karras. "And this one the morning after you'd gone, y'know, to New York. Was it Saturday? Saturday. Yes. Well, take a look at that. I just had a talk with a sergeant of police, and well well, look at this card, would you, Damien?"

As Karras examined it, the pastor explained that someone had slipped in a typewritten sheet between the original card and its cover. The ersatz text, though containing some strikeovers and various typographical errors, was in basically fluent and intelligible Latin and described in vivid, erotic detail an imagined homosexual encounter involving the Blesses Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene.

"That's enough, now, you don't have to read it all," said the pastor, snapping back the card as if fearing that it might be an occasion of sin. "Now that's excellent Latin; I mean, it's got style, a church Latin style. Well, the sergeant says he talked to some fellow, a psychologist, and he says that the person's been doin' this all--- well, he could be a priest, y'know, a very sick priest. Do you think?"

The psychiatrist considered for a while. Then nodded. "Yes. Yes, it could. Acting out a rebellion, perhaps, in a state of complete somnambulism. I don't know. It could be. Maybe so."

"Can you think of any candidates, Damien?"

"I don't get you."

"Well, now, sooner or later they come and see you, wouldn't you say? I mean, the sick ones, if there are any, from the campus. Do y'know any like that? I mean with that kind of illness, y'know."

"No, I don't."

"No, I didn't think you'd tell me."

"Well, I wouldn't know anyway, Father. Somnambulism is a way of resolving any number of possible conflict situations, and the usual form of resolution is symbolic. So I really wouldn't know. And if it is a somnambulist, he's probably got a complete posterior amnesia about what he's done, so that even he wouldn't have a clue."

"What if you were to tell him?" the pastor asked cagily. He plucked at an earlobe, a habitual gesture, Karras had noticed, whenever he thought he was being wily.

"I really don't know," repeated the psychiatrist.
"No. No, I really didn't think that you'd tell me." He rose and moved for the door. "Y'know what you're like, you people? Like priests!" he complained.
As Karras laughed gently, the pastor returned and dropped the altar card on his desk. "I suppose yon should study this thing." he mumbled. "Something might come to you."
The pastor moved for the door.
"Did they check it for fingerprints?" asked Karras.
The pastor stopped and turned slightly. "Oh, I doubt it. After all, it's not a criminal we're after, now, is it? More likely it's only a demented parishioner. What do you think of that, Damien? Do you think that it could be someone in the parish? You know, I think so. It wasn't a priest at all, it was someone among the parishioners." He was pulling at his earlobe again. "Don't you think?"
"I really wouldn't know," he said again.
"No, I didn't think you'd tell me."
Later that day, Father Karras was relieved of his duties as counselor and assigned to the Georgetown University Medical School as lecturer in psychiatry. His orders were to "rest."
CHAPTER TWO

Regan lay on her back on Klein's examining table, arms and legs bowed outward. Taking her foot in both his hands; the doctor flexed it toward her ankle. For moments he held it there in tension, then suddenly released it. The foot relaxed into normal position.
He repeated the procedure several times but without any variance in the result. He seemed dissatisfied. When Regan abruptly sat up and spat in his face; he instructed a nurse to remain in the room and returned to his office to talk to Chris.
It was April 26. He'd been out of the city both Sunday and Monday and Chris hadn't reached him until this morning to relate the happening at the party and the subsequent shaking of the bed.
"It was actually moving?"
"It was moving."
"How long?"
"I don't know. Maybe ten, maybe fifteen seconds. I- mean, that's all I saw. Then she sort of went stiff and wet the bed. Or maybe she'd wet it before. I don't know. But then all of a sudden she was dead asleep and never woke up till the next afternoon."
Dr. Klein entered thoughtfully.
"Well, what is it?" Chris asked in an anxious tone.

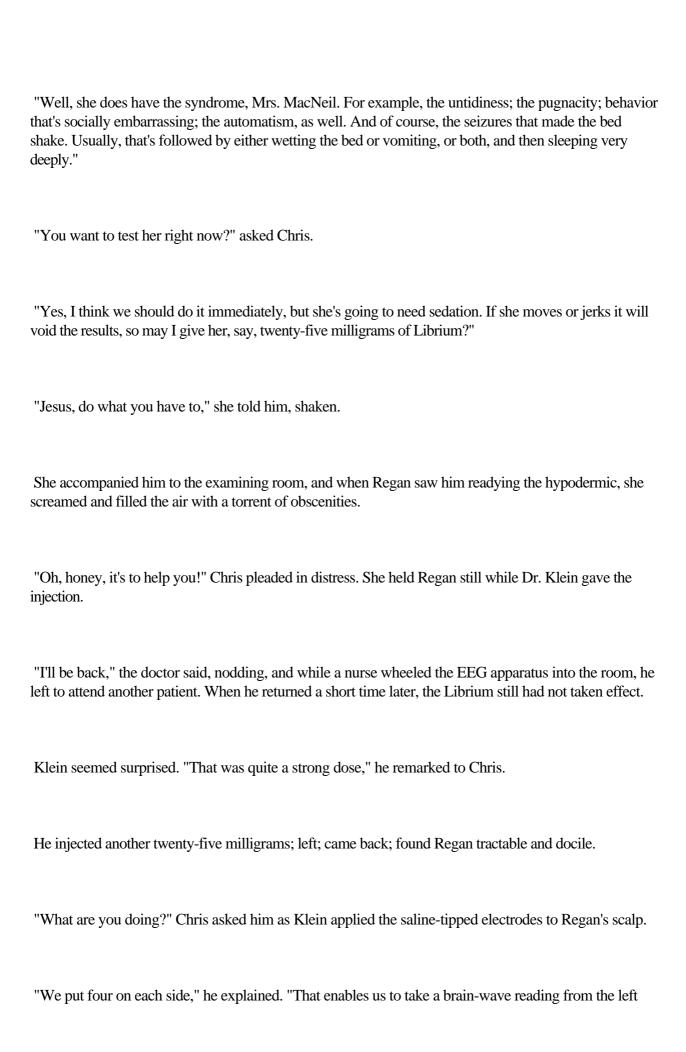
When she'd first arrived, he'd reported his suspicion that the shaking of the bed had been caused by a seizure of clonic contractions, an alternating tensing and relaxing of the muscles. The chronic form of such a condition, he'd told her, was clonus, and usually indicated a lesion in the brain.

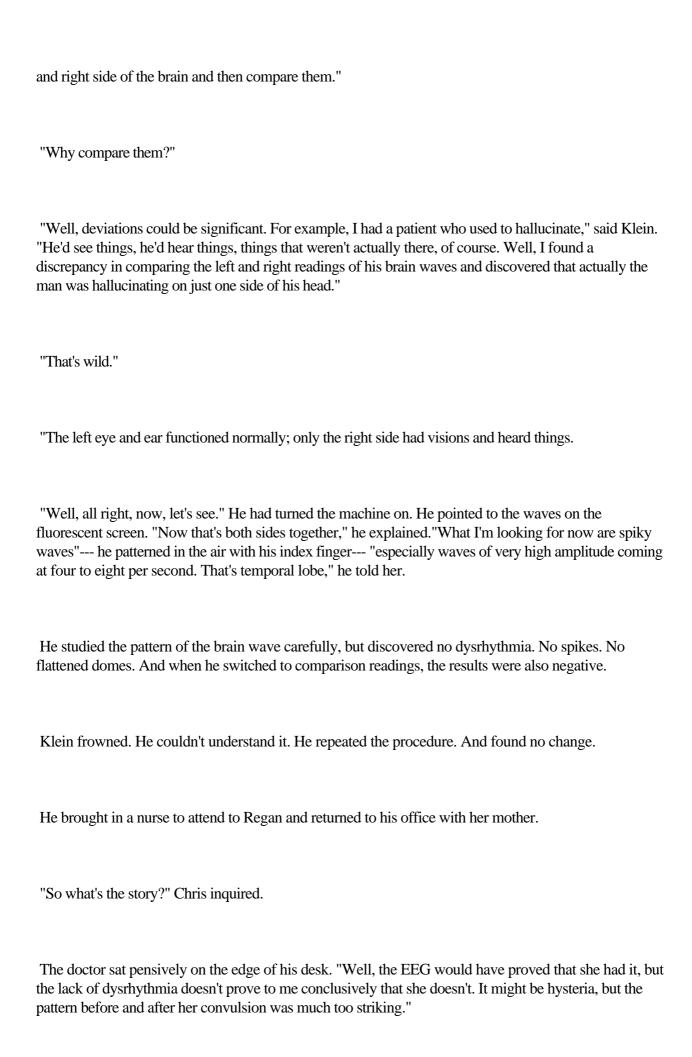
"Well, the test was negative," he told her, and described the procedure, explaining that in clonus the alternate flexing and releasing of the foot would have triggered a run of clonic contractions. As he sat at his desk, he still seemed worried, however, "Has she ever had a fall?"
"Like on the head?" Chris asked.
"Well, yes."
"No, not that I know of."
"Childhood diseases?"
"Just the usual. Measles and mumps and chicken pox."
"Sleepwalking history?"
"Not until now."
"What do you mean? She was walking in her sleep at the party?"
"Well, yes. She still doesn't know what she did that night. And there's stuff, too, that she doesn't remember."
"Lately?"
Sunday. Regan still sleeping. An overseas telephone call from Howard.

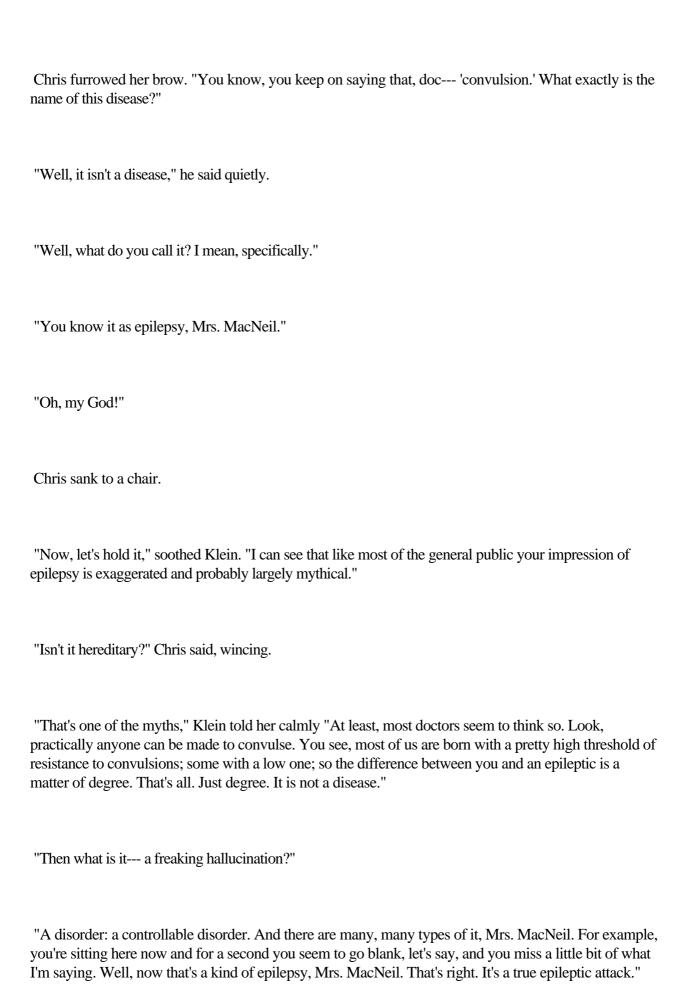












"Yeah, well, that isn't Regan," Chris rebutted. "And how come it's happening just all of a sudden?"

"Look, we still aren't sure that's what she's got, and I grant you that maybe you were right in the first place; very possibly it's psychosomatic. However, I doubt it. And to answer your question, any number of changes in the function of the brain can trigger a convulsion in the epileptic: worry; fatigue; emotional stress; a particular note on a musical instrument. I once had a patient, for instance, who never used to have a seizure except on a bus when he was a block away from home. Well, we finally discovered what was causing it: flickering light from a white slat fence reflected in the window of the bus. Now at another time of day, or if the bus had been going at a different speed, he wouldn't have convulsed, you see. He had a lesion, a scar in the brain that was caused by some childhood disease. In the case of your daughter, the scar would be forward---- up front in the temporal lobe---- and when it's hit by a particular electrical impulse of a certain wavelength and periodicity, it trig-gers a sudden burst of abnormal reactions from deep within a focus in the lobe. Do you see?"

"I guess," Chris sighed, dejected. "But I'll tell you the truth, doc, I don't understand how her whole personality could be changed."

"In temporal lobe, that's extremely common, and can last for days or even weeks. It isn't rare to find destructive and even criminal behavior. There's such a big change, in fact, that two or three hundred years ago people with temporal lobe disorders were often considered to be possessed by a devil."

"They were what?"

"Taken over by the mind of a demon. You know, something like a superstitious version of split personality."

Chris closed her eyes and lowered her forehead onto a fist. "Listen, tell me something good," she murmured.

"Well, now, don't be alarmed. If it is a lesion, in a way she's fortunate. Then all we have to do is remove the scar."

"Oh, swell."





Klein frowned and gently chewed on his lip for a moment. "Well, let's look at those X-rays," he finally told her.
Feeling drained and numb, Chris shepherded Regan to the radiologist; stayed at her side while the X-rays were taken; took her home. She'd been strangely mute since the second injection, and Chris made an effort now to engage her.
"Want to play some Monopoly or somethin'?"
Regan shook her head and then stared at her mother with unfocused eyes that seemed to be retracted into infinite remoteness. "I'm feeling sleepy," Regan said in a voice that belonged to the eyes. Then, turning, she climbed up the stairs to her bedroom.
Must be the Librium, Chris reflected as she watched her. Then at last she sighed and went into the kitchen. She poured some coffee and sat down at the breakfast-nook table with Sharon.
"How'd it go?"
"Oh, Christ!"
Chris fluttered the prescription slip mto the table. "Better call and get that filled," she said, and then explained what the doctor had told her. "If I'm busy or out, keep a real good eye on her, would you, Shar? He" Dawning. Sudden. "That reminds me."
She got up from the table and went up to Regan's bedroom, found her under the covers and apparently asleep.
Chris moved to the window and tightened the latch. She staffed below. The window, facing out from the side of the house, directly overlooked the precipitous public staircase that plunged to M Street far below.

Boy, I'd better call a locksmith right away.
Chris returned to the kitchen and added the chore to the list from which Sharon sat working, gave Willie the dinner menu, and returned a call from her agent.
"What about the script?" he wanted to know.
"Yeah, it's great, Ed; let's do it," she told him. "When's it go?"
"Well, your segment's in July, so you'll have to start preparing right away."
"You mean now?"
"I mean now. This isn't acting, Chris. You're involved in a lot of the preproduction. You've got to work with the set designer, the costume designer, the makeup artist, the producer. And you'll have to pick a cameraman and a cutter and block out your shots. C'mon, Chris, you know the drill."
"Oh, shit."
"You've got a problem?"
"Yeah, I do; I've got a problem."
"What's the problem?"
"Well, Regan's pretty sick."

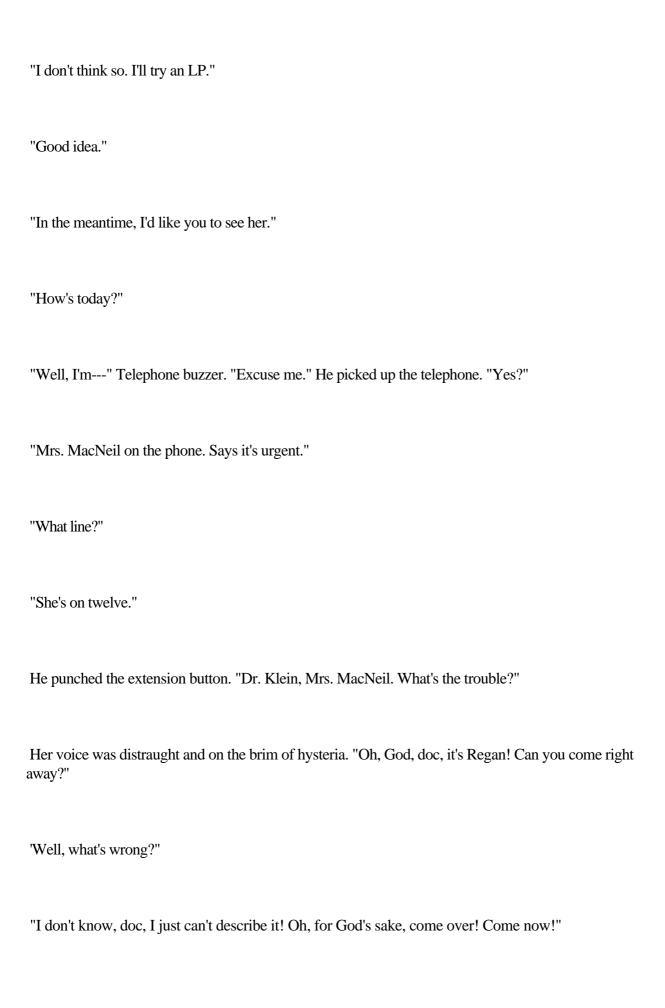


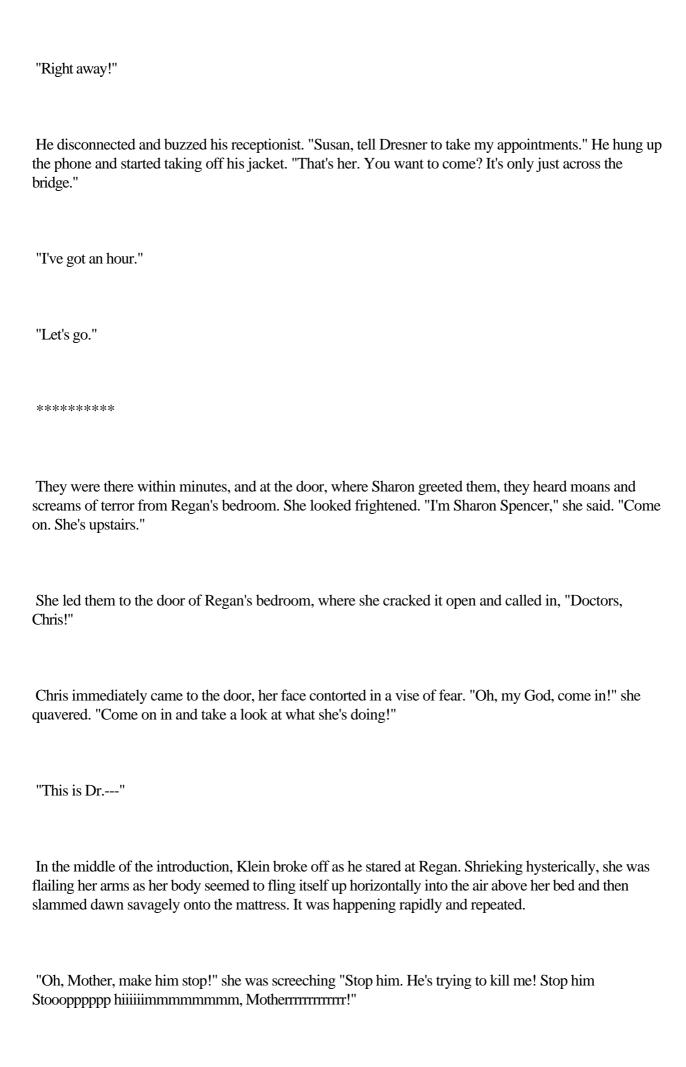


"Sweet lady," said Chris.



1	She looked in on Regan, who still seemed to be asleep under the covers, and apparently sleeping through. She checked the window again. Leaving the room, Chris made sure to leave the door wide open and then did the same with her own before getting into bed. She watched part of a movie on television. Then slept.
	The following morning, the book about devil worship had vanished from the table.
	No one noticed.
	CHAPTER THREE
1 2	The consulting neurologist pinned up the X-rays again and searched for indentations that would look as if the skull had been pounded like copper with a tiny hammer. Dr. Klein stood behind him with folded arms. They had both looked for lesions and collections of fluid; for a possible shifting of the pineal gland. Now they probed for Lückenshadl Skull, the telltale depressions that would indicate chronic intracranial pressure.
	They did not find it. The date was Thursday, April 28.
	The consulting neurologist removed his glasses and carefully tucked them into the left breast poet of his jacket. "There's just nothing there, Sam, Nothing I can see."
	Klein frowned at the floor with a shake of the head. "Doesn't figure."
	"Want to run another series?"

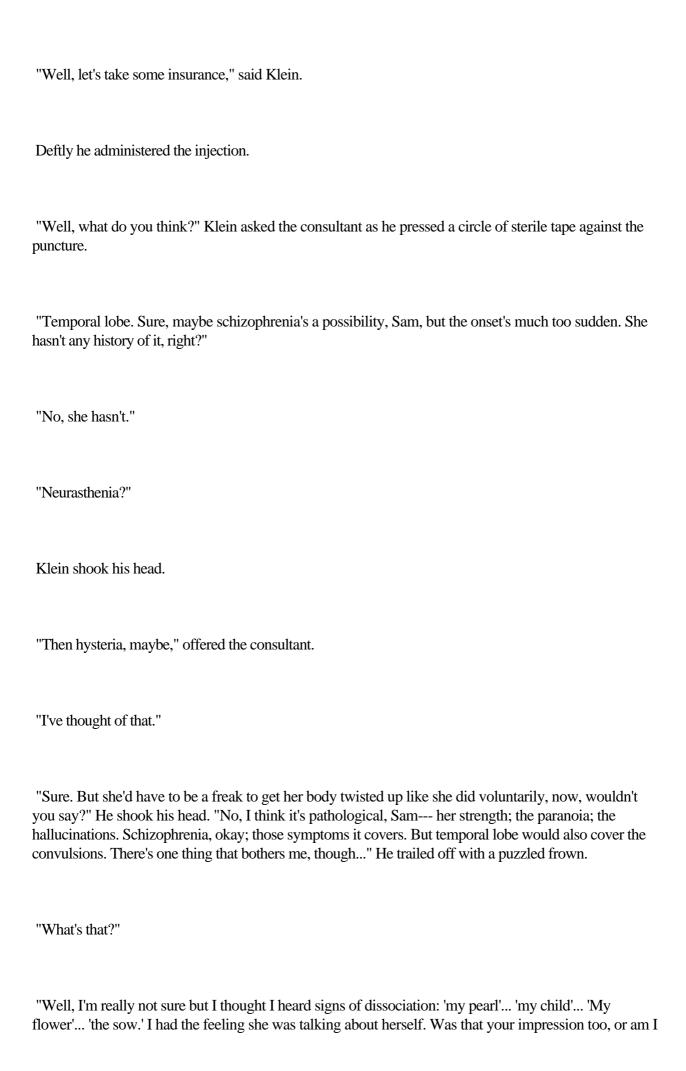




"Oh, my baby!" Chris whimpered as she jerked up a fist to her mouth and bit it. She turned a beseeching look to Klein. "Doc, what is it? What's happening?"
He shook his head, his gaze fixed on Regan as the odd phenomenon continued. She would lift about a foot each time and then fall with a wrenching of her breath, as if unseen hands had picked her up and thrown her down.
Chris shaded her eyes with a trembling hand. "Oh, Jesus, Jesus!" she said hoarsely. "Doc, what is it?"
The up and down movements ceased abruptly and the girl twisted feverishly from side to side with her eyes rolled upward into their sockets so that only the whites were exposed.
"Oh, he's burning me burning me!" Regan was moaning. "Oh, I'm burning! I'm burning!"
Her legs began rapidly crossing and uncrossing.
The doctors moved closer, one on either side of the bed. Still twisting and jerking, Regan arched her head back, disclosing a swollen, bulging throat. She began to mutter something incomprehensible in an oddly guttural tone.
"nowonmai nowonmai"
Klein reached down to check her pulse.
"Now, let's see what the trouble is, dear," he said gently.
And abruptly was reeling, stunned and staggering, across the room from the force of a vicious backward swing of Regan's arm as the girl sat up, her face contorted with a hideous rage.

"The sow is mine!" she bellowed in a coarse and powerful voice. "She is mine! Keep away from her! She is mine!"
A yelping laugh gushed up from her throat, and then she fell on her back as if someone had pushed her. She pulled up her nightgown, exposing her genitals. "Fuck me! Fuck me!" she screamed at the doctors, and with both her hands began masturbating frantically.
Moments later, Chris ran from the room with a stifled sob when Regan put her fingers to her mouth and licked them.
As Klein approached the bedside, Regan seemed to hug herself, her hands caressing her arms.
"Ah, yes, my pearl" she crooned in that strangely coarsened voice. Her eyes were closed as if in ecstasy. "My child my flower my pearl"
Then again she was twisting from side to side, moaning meaningless syllables over and over. And abruptly sat up with eyes staring wide with helpless terror.
She mewed like a cat.
Then barked.
Then neighed.
And then, bending at the waist, started whirling her torso around in rapid strenuous circles. She gasped for breath. "Oh, stop him!" she wept. stop him! It hurts! Make him stop! Make him stop! I can't breathe!"
Klein had seen enough. He fetched his medical bag to the window and quickly began to prepare an

injection.
The neurologist remained beside the bed and saw Regan fall backward as if from a shove. Her eyes rolled upward into their sockets again, and rolling from side to side, she began to mutter rapidly in guttural tones. The neurologist leaned closer and tried to make it out. Then he saw Klein gently beckoning. He moved to him.
"I'm giving her Librium," Klein told him guardedly, holding the syringe to the light of the window. "But you're going to have to hold her."
The neurologist nodded. He seemed preoccupied. He inclined his head to the side as if listening to the muttering from the bed.
"What's she saying?" Klein whispered.
"I don't know. Just gibberish. Nonsense syllables." Yet his own explanation seemed to leave him unsatisfied. "She says it as if it means something, though. it's got cadence."
Klein nodded toward the bed and they approached quietly from either side. As they come, she went rigid, as if in the stiffening grip of tetany, and the doctors -looked at each other significantly. Then looked again to Regan as she started to arch her body upward into an impossible position, bending it backward like a bow until the brow of her head had touched her feet. She was screaming in pain.
The doctors eyed each her with questioning surmise. Then Klein gave a signal to the neurologist. But before the consultant could seize her, Regan fell limp in a faint and wet the bed.
Klein leaned over and rolled up her eyelid. Checked her pulse. "She'll be out for a while," he murmured. "I think she convulsed. Don't you?"
"Yes, I think so."

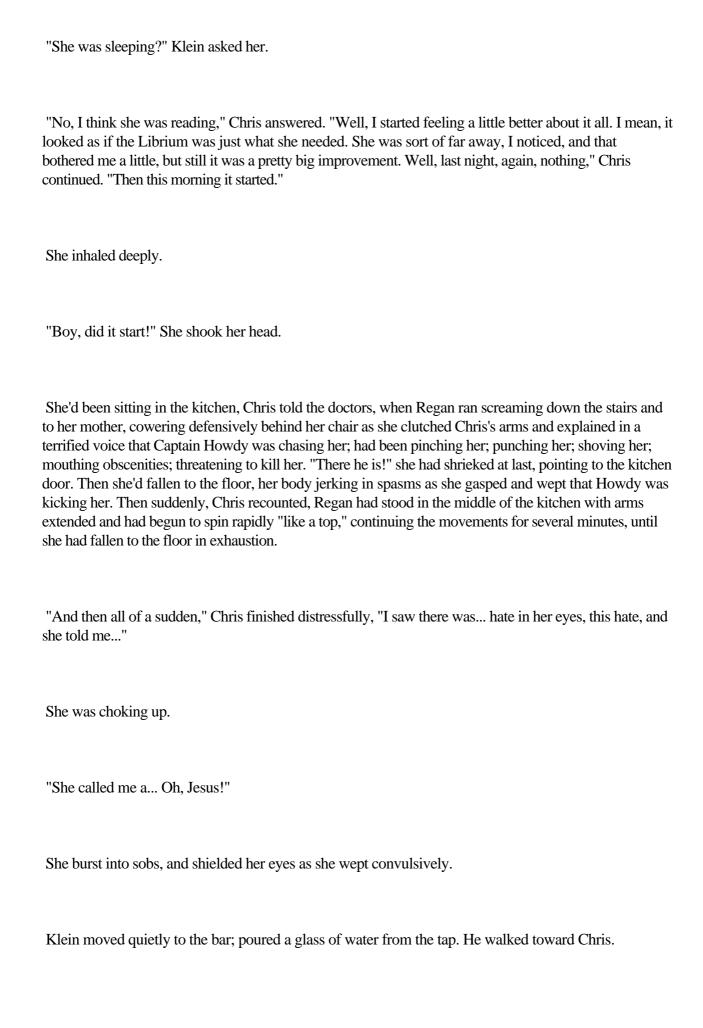


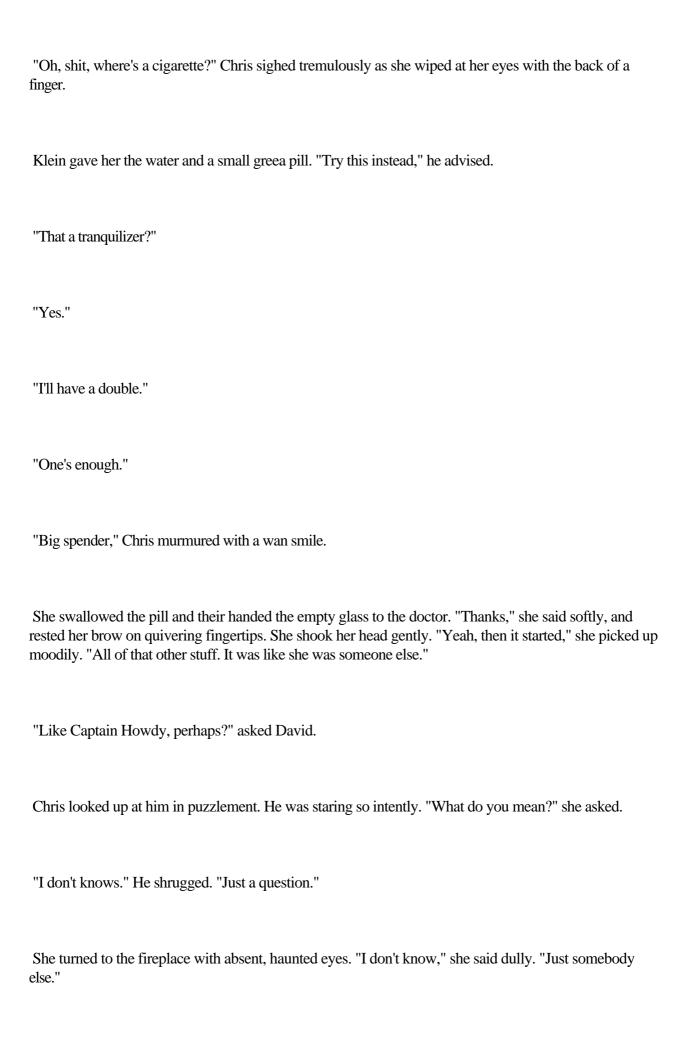
reading something into it?"
Klein stroked his lip as he mulled the question. "Well, frankly, at the time it never occurred to me, but then now that you point it out" He grunted thoughtfully. "Could be. Yes. Yes, it could."
Then he shrugged off the notion. "Well, I'll do an LP right now while she's out and then maybe we'll know something."
The neurologist nodded.
Klein poked around in his medical bag, found a pill and tucked it in his pocket. "Can you stay?"
The neurologist checked his watch. "Maybe half an hour."
"Let's talk to the mother."
They left the room and entered the hallway.
Chris and Sharon were leaning, heads lowed, against the balustrade by the staircase. As the doctors approached them, Chris wiped her nose with a balled, moist handkerchief. Her eyes were red from crying.
"She's sleeping," Klein told her.
"Thank God," Chris sighed.
"And she's heavily sedated. She'll probably sleep right through until tomorrow."





"I'll do it," said Sharon. She moved toward Regan's bedroom.	
"Can I make you some coffee?" asked Chris as the doctors followed down the stairs. "I gave the housekeepers the afternoon off, so it'll have to be instant."	
They declined.	
"I see you haven't fixed that window yet," noted Klein.	
"No, we called," Chris told him. "They're coming out tomorrow with shutters you can lock."	
He nodded approval.	
They entered the study, where Klein called his office and instructed an assistant to deliver the necessary equipment and medication to the house.	
"And set up the lab for a spinal workout," Klein instructed. "I'll run it myself right after the tap."	
When he'd finished the call, he turned to Chris and asked what had happened since last he saw Regan.	
"Well, Tuesday" Chris pondered "there was nothing at all. She went straight up to bed and slept right through until late the next morning, then"	
"Oh, no, no, wait," she amended. "No, she didn't. That's right. Willie mentioned that she'd heard her in the kitchen awfully early. I remember feeling glad that she'd gotten her appetite back. But she went back to bed then, I guess, because she stayed there the rest of the day."	









Chris handed it to Sharon. "Honey, do that for me, would you? Just call and they'll send it. I'd like to go with the doctor while he makes those tests Do you mind?" she asked him.
He noted the tightness around her eyes; the look of confusion and of helplessness. He nodded.
"I know how you feel." He smiled at her gently: "I feel the same way when I talk to mechanics about my car."
They left the house at precisely 6:18 P.M.

In his laboratory in the Rosslyn medical building, Klein ran a number of tests. First he analyzed protein content.
Normal.
Then a count of blood cells.
"Too many red," Klein explained, "means bleeding. And too many white would mean infection."
He was looking in particular for a fungus infection that was often the cause of chronic bizarre behavior. And again drew a blank.
At the last, Klein tested the fluid's sugar content.
"How come?" Chris asked him intently.



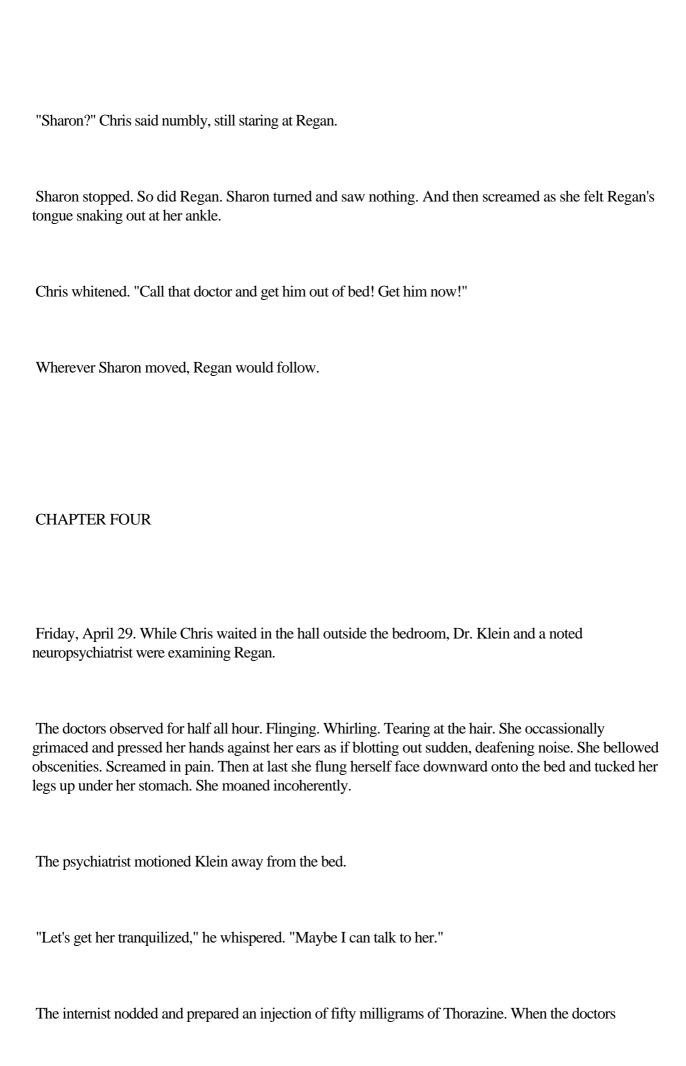


"He was here?"
"You mean he wasn't when you got home?"
"Listen, start all over," said Chris.
"Oh, that nut," Sharon chided with a headshake. "I couldn't get the druggist to deliver, so when Burke came around, I thought, fine, he can stay here with -Regan while I go get the Thorazine." She shrugged. "I should have known."
'Yeah, you should've. And so what did you buy?"
"Well, since I thought I had the time, I went and bought a rubber drawsheet for her bed." She displayed it.
"Did you eat?"
"No, I thought I'd fix a sandwich. Would you like one?"
"Good idea. Let's go and eat."
"What happened with the tests?" Sharon asked as they walked slowly to the kitchen.
"Not a thing. All negative. I'm going to have to get her a shrink," Chris answered dully.

After sandwiches and coffee, Sharon showed Chris how to give an injection.
"The two main things," she explained, "are to make sure that there aren't any air bubbles, and then you make sure that you haven't hit a vein. See, you aspirate a little, like this" she was demonstrating "and see if there's blood in the syringe."
For a time, Chris practiced the procedure on a grapefruit, and seemed to grow proficient. Then at 9:28 the front doorbell rang. Willie answered. It was Karl. As he passed through the kitchen, en route to his room, he nodded a good evening and remarked he'd forgotten to take his key.
"I can't believe it," Chris said to Sharon. "That's the first time he's ever admitted a mistake."
They passed the evening watching television in the study.
At 11:46, Chris answered the phone. The young director of the second unit, He sounded grave.
"Have you heard the news yet, Chris?"
'No, what?"
"Well, it's bad."
"What is it?" she asked.
"Burke's dead."

He'd been drank. He had stumbled. He had fallen down the steep flight of steps beside the house, fallen

far to the bottom, where a passing pedestrian on M Street watched as he tumbled into night without end. A broken neck. This bloody, crumpled scene, his last.
As the telephone fell from Chris's fingers, she was silently weeping, standing unsteadily. Sharon ran and caught her, supported her, hung up the phone and led her to the sofa.
"Burke's dead," Chris sobbed.
"Oh, my God!" gasped Sharon. "What happened?"
But Chris could not speak yet. She wept.
Then, later, they talked. For hours. They talked. Chris drank. Reminisced about Dennings. Now laughed. Now cried. "Ah, my God," she kept sighing. "Poor Burke poor Burke"
Her dream of death kept coming back to her.
At a little past five in the morning, Chris was standing moodily behind the bar, her elbows propped, head lowered, eyes sad. She was waiting for Sharon to return from the kitchen with a tray of ice.
She heard her coming.
"I still can't believe it," Sharon was sighing as she entered the study.
Chris looked up and froze.
Gliding spiderlike, rapidly, close behind Sharon, her body arched backward in a bow with her head almost touching her feet, was Regan, her tongue flicking quickly in and out of her mouth while she hissed sibilantly like a serpent.



approached the bed, however, Regan seemed to sense them and quickly turned over, and as the neuropsychiatrist attempted to hold her, she began to shriek in malevolent fury. Bit him. Fought him. Held him off. It was only when Karl was called in to assist that they managed to keep her sufficiently rigid for Klein to administer the injection.
The dosage proved inadequate. Another fifty milligrams was injected. They waited.
Regan grew tractable. Then dreamy. Then stared at the doctors in sudden bewilderment. "Where's Mom? I want my Mom!" she wept.
At a nod from the neuropsychiatrist, Klein left the room to go and get Chris.
"Your mother will be here in just a second, dear," the psychiatrist told Regan. He sat on the bed and stroked her head. "There, there, it's all right, dear, I'm a doctor."
"I want Mom!" wept Regan.
"She's coming. Do you hurt, dear?"
She nodded, the tears streaming down.
"Where?"
"just every place!" sobbed Regan. "I feel all achy!"
"Oh, my baby!"
"Mom!"

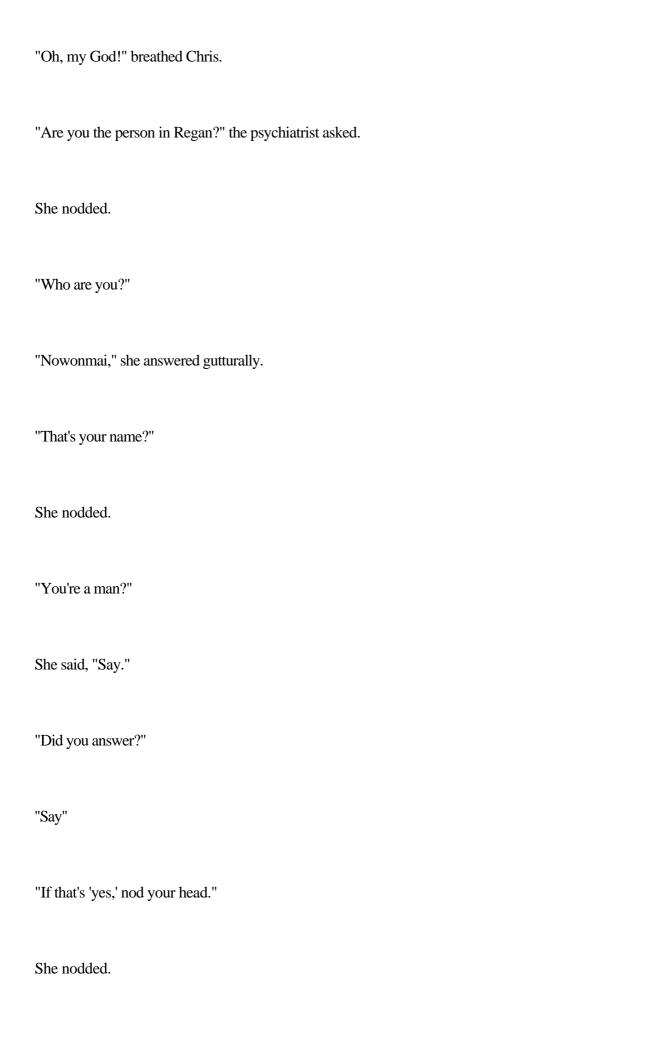
Chris ran to the bed and hugged her. Kissed her. Comforted and soothed. Then Chris herself began to weep. "Oh, Rags, you're back! It's really you!"
"Oh, Mom, he hurt me!" Regan sniffled. "Make him stop hurting me! Please? Okay?"
Chris looked puzzled for a moment, then glanced to the doctors with a pleading question in her eyes.
"She's heavily sedated," the psychiatrist said gently.
"You mean?"
He cut her off. "We'll see." Then he turned to Regan. "Can you tell me what's wrong, dear?"
"I don't know," she answered. "I don't know why he does it to me." Tears rolled down from her eyes. "He was always my friend before!"
"Who's that?"
"Captain Howdy! And then it's like somebody else is inside me! Making me do things!"
"Captain Howdy?"
"I don't know!"
"A person?"

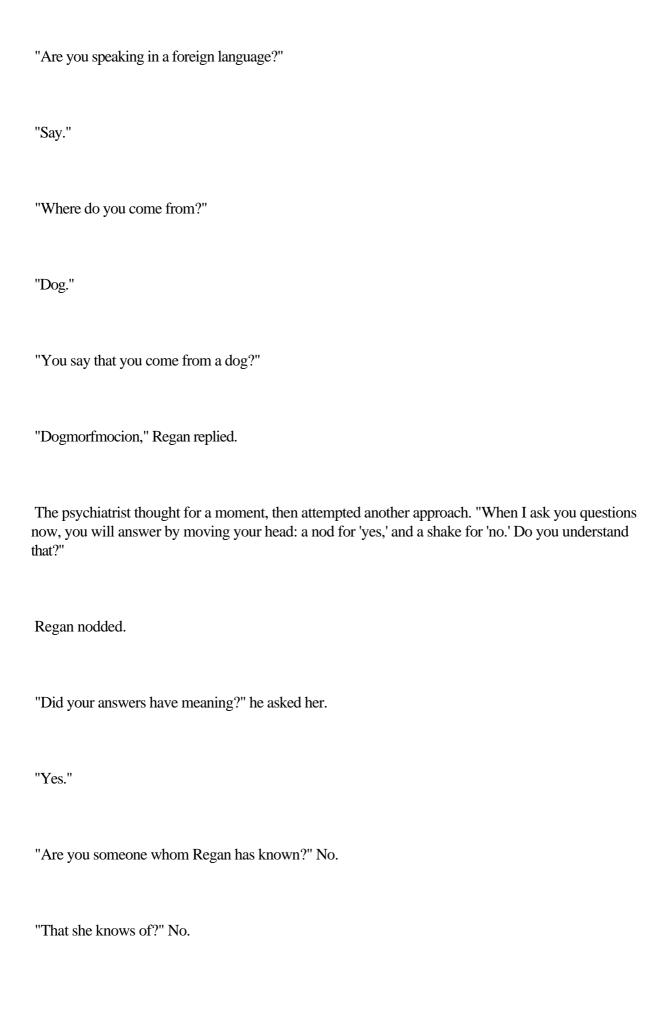


"Would you close those shutters for me, Sam?" the psychiatrist asked him. "And pull the drapes?"
When the room was dark, the psychiatrist gripped the chain in his fingertips and began to swing the bauble back and forth with an easy movement. He shone a penlight on it. It glowed. He began to intone the hypnotic ritual. "Now watch this, Regan, keep watching, and soon you'll feel your eyelids growing heavier and heavier"
Within a very short time, she seemed to be in trance.
"Extremely suggestible," the psychiatrist murmured. Then he spoke to the girl. "Are you comfortable, Regan?"
"Yes." Her voice was soft and whispery.
"How old are you, Regan?"
"Twelve."
"Is there someone inside you?"
"Sometimes."
"When?"
"Different times."
"It's a person?"

"Yes."
"Who is it?"
"I don't know."
"Captain Howdy?"
"I don't know."
"A man?"
"I don't know."
"But he's there."
"Yes, sometimes."
"Now?"
"I don't know."
"If I ask him to tell me, will you let him answer?"
"No!"











Klein running forward.
Regan with her head back, cackling demonically, then howling like a wolf.
Chris slapped at the light switch. Turned. Saw grainy, flickering film of a slow-motion nightmare: Regan and the doctors writhing on the bed in a tangle of shifting arms and legs, in a melee of grimaces, gasps and curses, and the howling and the yelping and the hideous laughter, with Regan oinking, Regan neighing, then the film racing faster and the bedstead shaking, violently quivering from side to side as Chris watched helplessly while her daughter's eyes rolled upward into their sockets and she wrenched up a keening shriek of terror torn raw and bloody from the base of her spine.
Regan crumpled and fell unconscious. Something unspeakable left the room.
For a breathless moment, no one moved. Then slowly and carefully, the doctors untangled themselves; stood up. They stared at Regan. After a time, the expressionless Klein took Regan's pulse. Satisfied, he slowly pulled up her blanket and nodded to the others. They left the room and went down to the study.
For a time, no one spoke. Chris was on the sofa. Klein and the psychiatrist sat near her in facing chairs. The psychiatrist was pensive, pinching at his lip as he stared at the coffee table; then he sighed and looked up at Chris. She turned her burned-out gaze to his. "What the hell's going on?" she asked in a mournful, haggard whisper.
"Did you recognize the language she was speaking?" he asked her.
Chris shook her head.
"Have you any religion?"
"No."



where this person comes from. I mean, you keep hearing about 'split personality' but I've never really known any explanation."

"Well, neither does anyone else, Mrs. MacNeil. We use concepts like 'consciousness'--- 'mind'--- 'personality,' but we don't really know yet what these things are." He was shaking his head. "Not really. Not at all. So when I start talking about something like multiple or split personality, all we have are some theories that raise more questions than they give answers. Freud thought that certain ideas and feelings are somehow repressed by the conscious mind, but remain alive in a person's subconscious; remain quite strong, in fact, and continue to seek expression through various psychiatric symptoms. Now when this repressed, or let's call it dissociated material--- the word 'dissociation' implying a splitting off from the mainstream of consciousness--- -well, when this type of material is sufficiently strong, or where the subject's personality is disorganized and weak, the result can be schizophrenic psychosis. Now that isn't the same, he cautioned, "as dual personality. Schizophrenia means a shattering of personality. But where the dissociated material is strong enough to somehow come glued together, to somehow organize in the individual's subconscious--- why, then it's bees known, at times, to function independently as a sep-arate personality; to take over the bodily functions."

He took a breath. Chris listened intently and he went on. "That's one theory. There are several others, some of them involving the notion of escape into unawareness; escape from some conflict or emotional problem. Getting back to Regan, she hasn't any history of schizophrenia and the EEG didn't show up the brain-wave pattern that normally accompanies it. So I tend to reject schizophrenia. Which leaves us the general field of hysteria."

"I gave last week," Chris murmured bleakly.

The worried psychiatrist smiled thinly. "Hysteria," he continued, "is a form of neurosis in which emotional disturbances are converted into bodily disorders. Now, in certain of its forms, there's dissociation. In psychasthenia, for example, the individual loses consciousness of his actions, but he sees himself act and attributes his actions to someone else. His idea of the second personality is vague, however, and Regan's seems specific. So we come to what Freud used to call the 'conversion' form of hysteria. It grows from unconscious feelings of guilt and the need to be punished. Dissociation is the paramount feature here, evert multiple personality. And the syndrome might also include epileptoid-like convulsions; hallucinations; abnormal motor excitement."

"Gee, that does sound a lot like Regan," Chris ventured moodily. "Don't you think? I mean, except for the guilt part. What would she have to feel guilty about?"

"Well, a cliché answer," the psychiatrist responded, -"might be the divorce. Children often feel they are the ones rejected and assume the full responsibility for the departure of one of their parents. In the case

of your daughter, there's reason to believe that that could be the case. Here I'm thinking of the brooding and the deep depression over the notion of people dying: thanatophobia. In children, you'll find it accompanied by guilt formation that's related to family stress, very often fear of the loss of a parent. It produces rage and intense frustration. In addition, the guilt in this type of hysteria needn't be known to the conscious mind. It could even be the guilt that we call "free-floating," a general guilt that relates to nothing in particular," he concluded.

Chris gave her head a shape. "I'm confused," she murmured. "I mean, where does this new personality come in?"

"Well, again, it's a guess," he replied, "just a guess--- but assuming that it is conversion hysteria stemming from guilt, then the second personality is simply the agent who handles the punishing. If Regan herself were to do it, you see, that would mean she would recognize her guilt. But she wants to escape that recognition. Therefore; a second personality."

"And that's what you think she's got?"

"As I said, I don't know," replied the psychiatrist, still evasive. He seemed to be choosing his words as he would moss-covered stones to cross a stream. "It's extremely unusual for a child of Regan's age, to be able to pull together and organize the components of a new personality. And certain--- well, other things are puzzling. Her performance with the Ouija board, for example, would indicate extreme suggestibility; and yet apparently I never really hypnotized her." He shrugged. "Well, perhaps she resisted. But the really striking thing," he noted, "is the new personality's apparent precocity. It isn't a twelve-year-old at all. It's much, much older. And then there's the language she was speaking...." He stated at the rug in front of the fireplace, thoughtfully tugging at his lower lip. "There's a similar state, of course, but we don't know much about it: a form of somnambulism where the subject suddenly manifests knowledge or skills that he's never learned--- and where the intention of the second personality is the destruction of the first. However..."

The word trailed away. Abruptly the psychiatrist looked up at Chris. "Well, it's terribly complicated," he told her, "and I've oversimplified outrageously."

"So what's the bottom line?" Chris aspect.

"At the moment," he told her, "a blank. She need an intensive examination by a team of experts; two or three weeks of really concentrated study in a clinical atmosphere; say, the Barringer Clinic in Dayton."

C	Chris looked away.
"	It's a problem?"
"	No. No problem." She sighed. "I just lost Hope, that's all."
117	Didn't get you."
"	It's an inside tragedy."
	The psychiatrist telephoned the Barringer Clinic from Chris's study. They agreed to take Regan the sllowing day.
Т	The doctors left.
V	Chris swallowed pain with remembrance of Dennings, with remembrance of death and the worm and the bid and unspeakable loneliness and stillness, darkness, underneath the sod, with nothing moving, no, no action Briefly, she wept. Too much too much Then she put it away and began to pack.
*	*****
	the was standing in her bedroom selecting a camouflaging wig to wear in Dayton when Karl appeared. here was someone to see her, he told her.
117	Who?"
"	Detective."

"And he wants to see me?"

He nodded. Then he handed her a business card. She looked it over blankly. WILLIAM F. KINDERMAN, it announced, LIEUTENANT OF DETECTIVES; and tucked in the lower-left-hand corner like a poor relation: Homicide Division. It was printed in an ornate, raised Tudor typeface that might have been selected by a dealer in antiques.

She looked up from the card with a sniffing suspicion. "Has he got something with him that might be a script? Like a big manila envelope or something?"

There was no one in the world, Chris had come to discover, who didn't have a novel or a script or a notion for one or both tucked away in a drawer or a mental sock. She seemed to attract them as priests did drunks.

But Karl shook his head. Chris immediately grew curious and walked down the stairs. Burke? Was it something to do with Burke?

He was sagging in the entry hall, the brim of his limp and crumpled hat clutched tight with short fat fingers freshly manicured. Plump. In his middle fifties. Jowly cheeks that gleamed of soap. Yet rumpled trousers, cuffed and baggy, mocked the sedulous care that he gave his body. A gray tweed coat hung loose and old-fashioned, and his moist brown eyes, which dropped at the corners, seemed to be staring at times gone by. He wheezed asthmatically as he waited.

Chris approached. The detective extended his hand with a weary and somewhat fatherly manner, and spoke in a hoarse, emphysematous whisper. "I'd know that face in any lineup, Miss MacNeil."

"Am I in one?" Chris asked him earnestly as she took his hand.

"Oh, my goodness, oh, no," he said, brushing at the notion with his hand as if swatting at a fly. He'd closed his eyes and inclined his head; the other hood rested lightly on his paunch. Chris was expecting a God forbid! "No, it's strictly routine," he assured her, "routine. Look, you're busy? Tomorrow. I'll come again tomorrow."

He was turning away as if to leave, but Chris said anxiously, "What is it? Burke? Burke Dennings?"
The detective's drooping, careless ease had somehow tightened the springs of her tension.
"A shame. What a shame," the detective breathed, with lowered eyes and a shake of the head.
"Was he killed?" Chris asked with a look of shock. "I mean, is that why you're here? He was killed? Is that it?"
"No, no, no, it's routine." he repeated, "routine. You know, a man so important, we just couldn't pass it. We couldn't," he pleaded with a helpless look. "At least one or two questions. Did he fall? Was he pushed?" As he asked, he was listing from side to side with his head and his hand. Then he shrugged and huskily whispered, "Who knows?"
"Was he robbed?"
"No, not robbed, Miss MacNeil, never robbed, but then who needs a motive in times like these?" His hands were constantly in motion, like a flabby glove informed by the fingers of a yawning puppeteer. "Why, today, for a murderer, Miss MacNeil, a motive is only an encumbrance; in fact, a deterrent." He shook his head. "These drugs, these drugs," he bemoaned. "These drugs. This LSD."
He load at Chris as he tapped his chest with the tips of his fingers. "Believe me, I'm a father, and when I see what's going on, it breaks my heart. You've got children?"
"Yes, one."
"A son?"
"A daughter."

"Well"
"Listen, come on in the study," Chris interrupted anxiously, turning about to lead the way. She was losing all patience.
"Miss MacNeil, could I trouble you for something?"
She turned with the dim and weary expectation that he wanted her autograph for his children. It was never for themselves. It was always for their children. "Yeah, sure," she said.
"My stomach." He gestured with a trace of a grimace. "Do you keep any Calso water, maybe? If it's trouble, never mind; I don't want to be trouble."
"No, no trouble at all," she sighed. "Grab a chair in the study." She pointed, then turned and headed for the kitchen. "I think there's a bottle in the fridge."
"No, I'll come to the kitchen," he told her, following. "I hate to be a bother."
"No bother."
"No, really, you're busy, I'll come. You've got children?" he asked as they walked. "No, that's right; Yes, a daugther;. you told me; that's right. Just the one."
"And how old?"
"She just turned twelve."

"Then you don't have to worry," he breathed. "No, not yet. Later on, though, watch, out." He was shaking his head. Chris noticed that his walk was a modified waddle. "When you see all the sickness day in and day out," he continued. "Unbelievable. Incredible. Crazy. You know, I looked at my wife just a couple of days ago--- or weeks ago--- I forget. I said, Mary, the world--- -the entire world--- is having a massive nervous breakdown. All. The whole world." He gestured globally. They had entered the kitchen, where Karl was polishing the interior of the oven. He neither turned nor acknowledged their presence. "This is really so embarrassing," the detective wheezed hoarsely as Chris was opening the refrigerator door. Yet his gaze was on Karl brushing swiftly and questioningly over his back, and his arms and his neck like a small, dark bird skimming over a lake. "I meet a famous motion-picture star," he confinued, "and I ask for some Calso water. Ah, boy." Chris had found the bottle aced now was looking for an opener. "Ice?" she asked. "No, plain; plain is fine." She was opening the bottle. "You know that film you made called Angel?" he said. "I saw that film six times." "If you were looking for the killer," she murmured as she poured out the bubbling Calso, "arrest the producer and the cutter." "Oh, no, no, it was excellent--- really--- I loved it!"

"Oh, thank you." He sat. "No, the film was just lovely," he insisted. "So touching. But just one thing," he ventured, "One little tiny, minuscule point. Oh, thank you."

"Sit down" She was nodding at the table.

She'd set down the glass of Calso and sat on the other side of the table, hands clasped before her.

"One minor flaw," he resumed apologetically. "Only minor. And please believe me, I'm only a layman. You know? I'm just audience. What do I know? How-ever, it seemed to me--- to a layman--- that the musical score was getting in the way of certain scenes. It was too intrusive." He was earnest now; caught up. "It kept on reminding me that this was a movie. You know? Like so many of these fancy camera angles lately. So distracting. Incidentally, the score, Miss MacNeil--- did he steal that perhaps from Mendelssohn?"

Chris drummed her fingertips lightly on the table. Strange detective. And why was he constantly glancing to Karl?

"I wouldn't know," she said, "but I'm glad you liked the picture. Better drink that," she told him, nodding to the Calso. "It tends to get flat."

"Yes, of course. I'm so garrulous. You're busy. Forgive me." He lifted the glass as if in toast and drained its contents, his little finger arching demurely away from the others. "Ah, good, that's good," he exhaled, contented, as he put aside the glass, his eye falling lightly on Regan's sculpture of the bird. It was now the centerpiece of the table, its beak floating mockingly and at length above the salt and pepper shakers. "Quaint." He smiled. "Nice." He looked up. "The artist?"

"My daughter," Chris told him.

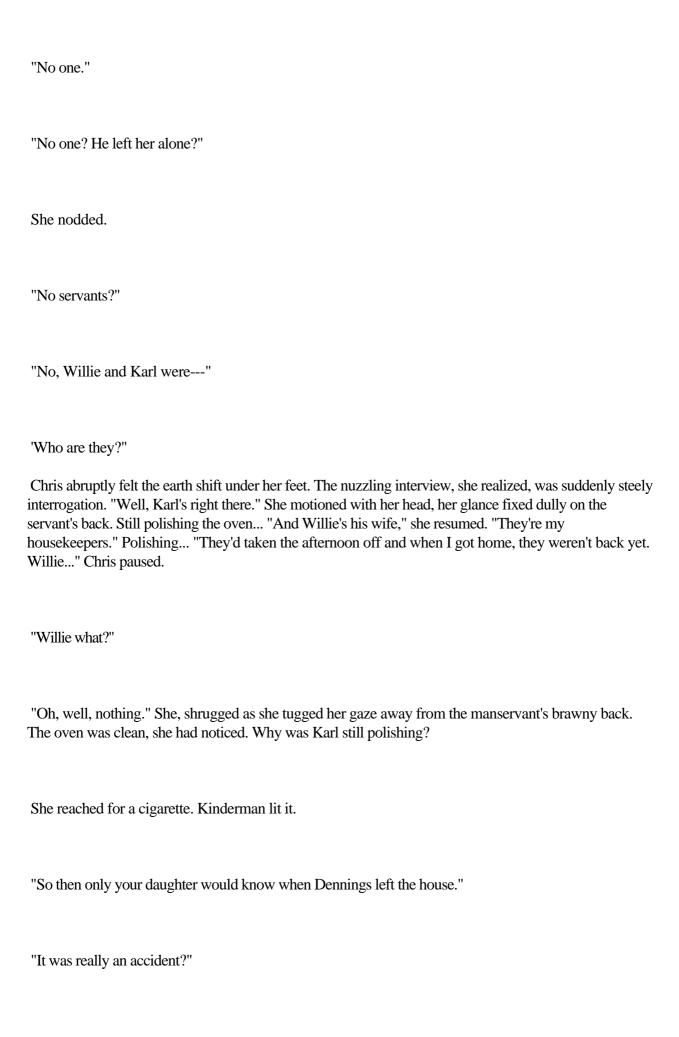
"Very nice."

"Look, I hate to be---"

"Yes, yes, I know, I'm a nuisance. Well, look, just a question or two and we're done. In fact, only one question and then I'll be going." He was glancing at his wristwatch as if he were anxious to get away to some appointment. "Since poor Mr. Dennings," he labored breathily; "had completed his filming in this area, we wondered if he might have been visiting someone on the night of the accident. Now other than yourself, Of course, did he have any friends in this area?"

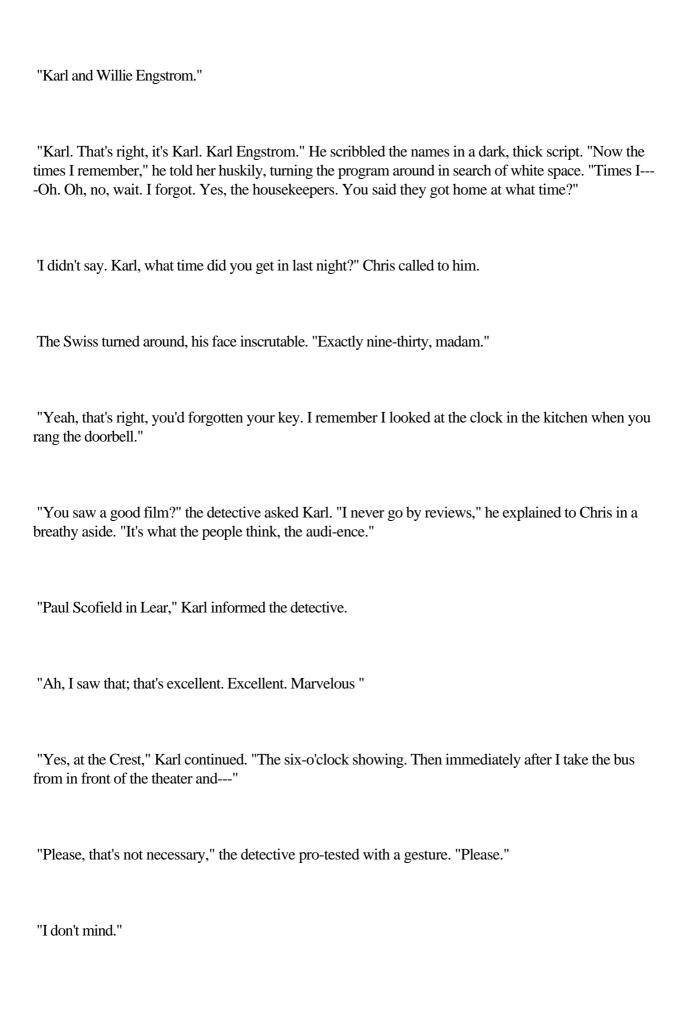


"Sharon Spencer. She's my secretary. She was here when Burke dropped by. She"
"He came to see her?" he asked.
"No, me."
'Yes, of course. Yes, forgive me for interrupting."
"My daughter was sick and Sharon left him here while she went to pick up some prescriptions. By the time I got home, though, Burke was gone."
"And what time was that, please?"
"Seven-fifteen or so, seven-thirty."
"And what time had you left?"
"Maybe six-fifteenish."
"What time had Miss Spencer left?"
"I don't know."
"And between the time Miss Spencer left and the time you returned, who was here in the house with Mr Dennings besides your danghter?"



"Oh, of course. It's routine, Miss MacNeil, its routine. Mr. Dennings wasn't robbed and he had no enemies, none that we know of, that is, in the District."
Chris darted a momentary glance to Karl but then shifted it quickly bade to Kinderman. Had he noticed? Apparently not. He was fingering the sculpture.
"It's got a name, this kind of bird; I can't think of it. something." He noticed Chris staring and looked vaguely embarrassed. "Forgive me, you're busy. Well, a minute and we're done. Now your daughter, she would know when Mr. Dennings left?"
"No, she wouldn't. She was heavily sedated."
"Ah, dear me, a shame," His droopy eyelids seeped concern. "It's serious?"
"Yes, I'm afraid it is."
"May I ask?" he probed with a delicate gesture.
'We still don't know."
"Watch out for drafts," he cautioned firmly.
Chris looked blank.
"A draft in the winter when a house is hot is a magic carpet for bacteria. My mother used to say that. Maybe that's folk myth. Maybe." He shrugged. "But a myth, to speak plainly, to me is like a menu in a fancy French restaurant: glamorous, complicated camouflage for a fact you wouldn't otherwise swallow, like maybe lima beans," he said earnestly.

Chris relaxed.	. The shaggy dog padding fuddled through cornfields had returned.
"That's hers, the looking out on	hat's her room" he was thumbing toward the ceiling "with that great big window a these steps?"
Chris nodded	•
"Keep the wir	ndow closed and she'll get better."
"Well, it's alw pocket of his j	vays closed and it's always shuttered" Chris said as he dipped a pudgy hand in the inside acket.
"She'll get bet	ter," he repeated sententiously. "Just remember, 'An ounce of prevention' "
Chris drumme	ed her fingertips on the tabletop again.
"You're busy.	. Well, we're finished. Just a note for the record routine we're all done."
production of toothmarked y the blade of a	ket of the jacket he'd extracted a crumpled mimeographed program of a high-school Cyrano de Bergerac and now groped in the pockets of his coat, where he netted a rellow stub of a number 2 pencil, whose point had the look of having been sharpened with scissors. He pressed the program flat on the table, brushing out the wrinkles. "Now just a he puffed. "That's Spencer with a c?"
"Yes, c."	
"A c," he repe Willie?"	eated, writing the name in a margin of the program. "And the housekeepers? John and







"Keep her out of the draft."

They had reached the front door of the house. He put a hand on the doorknob. "Well, I would say that it's been a pleasure, but under the circumstances..." He bowed his head and shook it. "I'm sorry. Really. I'm terribly sorry."

Chris folded her arms and looked down at the rug. She nodded briefly.

Kinderman opened the door and stepped outside. As he turned to Chris, he was putting on his hat. "Well, good luck with your daugher."

"Thanks." She smiled wanly. "Good luck with the world."

He nodded with a gentle warmth and sadness, then waddled away. Chris watched as he listed toward a waiting squad car parked near the corner in front of a fire hydrant. He flung up a hand to his hat as a shearing wind sprang sharp from the south. The hem of his coat flapped. Chris closed the door.

When he'd entered the passenger side of the squad car, Kinderman fumed and looked back at the house. He thought he saw movement at Regan's window, a quick, lithe figure flashing to the side and out of view. He wasn't sure. He'd seen it peripherally as he'd turned. But he noted that the shutters were open. Odd. For a moment he waited. No one appeared. With a puzzled frown, the detective turned and opened the glove compartment, extracting a small brown envelope and a penknife. Unclasping the smallest of the blades of the knife, he held his thumb inside the envelope and surgically scraped paint from Regan's sculpture from under his thumbnail. When he had finished and was sealing the envelope, he nodded to the detective-sergeant behind, the wheel. They pulled away.

As they drove down Prospect Street, Kinderman pocketed the envelope. "take it easy," he captioned the sergeant, glancing at the traffic building up ahead. "This is business, not pleasure." He rubbed at his eyes with weary fingers. "Ah, what a life," he sighed. "What a life."

Later, that evening, while Dr. Klein was injecting Regan with fifty milligrams of Sparine to assure her tranquillity on the journey to Dayton, Lieutenant Kinderman stood brooding in his office, palms pressed flat atop his desk as he pored over fragments of baffling data. The narrow beam of an ancient desk lamp flared on a clutter of scattered reports. There was no other light. He believed that it helped him narrow the focus of concentration.

Kinderman's breathing labored heavy in the darkness as his glance flitted here; now there. Then he took a deep breath and shut his eyes. Mental Clearance Sale! he instructed himself, as he did whenever he wished to tidy his brain for a fresh point of view: Absolutely Everything Must Go!

When he opened his eyes, he examined the pathologist's report on Dennings:

...tearing of the spinal cord with fractured skull and neck, plus numerous contusions, lacerations, and abrasions; stretching of the neck skin; ecchymosis of the neck skin; shearing of platysma, sternomastoid, splenius, trapezius and various smaller muscles of the neck, with fracture of the spine and of the vertebrae and shearing of both the anterior and posterior spi-nous ligaments....

He looked out a window at the dark of the city. The Capitol dome light glowed. The Congress was working late. He shut his eyes again, recalling his conversation with the District pathologist at eleven-fifty-five on the night of Denning's death.

"It could have happened in the fall?"

"No, it's very unlikely. The sternomastoids and the trapezius muscles alone are enough to prevent it. Then you've also got the various articulations of the cervical spine to be overcome as well as the ligaments holding the bores together."

"Speaking plainly, however, is it possible?"



Why would he done so?
The Engstrom were hired by Chris MacNeil only two months later, which meant that the doctor had given them a favorable reference.
Why would he do so?
Engstrom had certainly pilfered the drugs, and yet a medical examination at the time of the charge had failed to yield the slightest sign that the man was an addict, or even a user.
Why not?
With his eyes still closed, the detective softly recited Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky": " 'Twas brillig and

When he'd finished reciting, he opened his eyes and fixed his gaze on the Capitol rotunda, trying to keep his mind a blank. But as usual, he found the task impossible. Sighing, he glanced at the police

psychologist's report on the recent desecrations at Holy Trinity: "...statue ...phallus ...human excrement...

Damien Karras," he had underscored in red. He breathed in the silence and then reached for a scholarly work on witchcraft, turning to a page he had marked with a paper clip:

the slithy tones..." Another of his mind-clearing tricks.

Black Mass... a form of devil worship, the ritual, in the main, consisting of (1) exhortation (the "sermon") to performance of evil among the community, (2) coition with the demon (reputedly painful, the demon's penis invariably described as "icy cold"), and (3) a variety of desecrations that were largely sexual in nature. For example, communion Hosts of unusual size were prepared (compounded of flour, feces, menstrual blood and pus), which then were slit and used as artificial vaginas with which the priests would ferociously copulate while raving that they were ravishing the Virgin Mother of God or that they were sodomizing Christ. In another instance of such practice, a statue of Christ was inserted deep in a girl's vagina while into her anus was inserted the Host, which the priest then crushed as he shouted blasphemies and sodomized the girl. Life-sized images of Christ and the Virgin Mary also played a frequent role in the ritual. The image of the Virgin, for example— usually painted to give her a dissolute, sluttish appearance— was equipped with breasts which cultists sucked, and also a vagina into which the penis might be inserted. The statues of Christ were equipped with a phallus for fellatio by both the men and the women, and also for insertion into the vagina of the women and the anus of the men. Occasionally, rather than an image, a human figure was bound to a cross and made to function in place of the statue, and upon the discharge of his semen it was collected in a blasphemously consecrated chalice

and used in the making of the communion host, which was destined to be consecrated on an altar coveted with excrement. This
Kinderman flipped the pages to an underlined paragraph dealing with ritualistic murder. He read it slowly, nibbling at the pad of an index finger, and when he had finished he frowned at the page and shook his head. He lifted a brooding glance to the -lamp. He flicked it out. He left his office and drove to the morgue.
The young attendant at the desk wan munching at a ham and cheese sandwich on rye, and brushed the crumbs from a crossword puzzle as Kinderman approached him.
"Dennings," the detective whispered hoarsely.
The attendant nodded, filling in a five-letter horizontal, then rose with his sandwich and moved down the hall. Kinderman followed him, hat in hand, followed faint scent of caraway seed and mustard to rows of refrigerated lockers, to the dreamless cabinet used for the filing of sightless eyes.
They halted at locker 32, The expressionless attendant slid it out. He bit at his sandwich, and a fragment of mayonnaise-speckled crust fell lightly to the shroud.
For a moment Kinderman stared down; then, slowly and gently, he pulled back the sheet to expose what he'd seen and yet could not accept.
Burke Dennings' head was turned completely around, facing backward.
CHAPTER FIVE

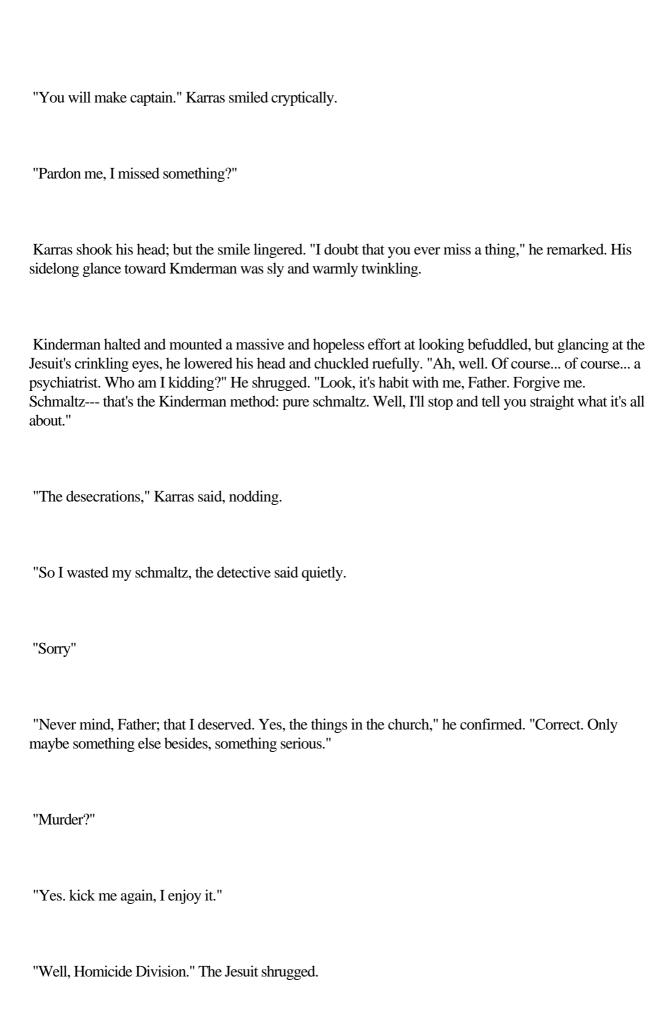
Cupped in the warm, green hollow of the campus, Damien Karras, jogged alone around an oval, loamy
track in khaki shorts and a cotton T-shit drenched with the cling of healing sweat. Up ahead, on a hillock,
the lime-white dome of the astronamical observatory pulsed with the beat of his stride; behind him, the
medical school fell away with churned-up shards of earth and care.

Since release from his duties, he came here daily, lapping the miles and chasing sleep. He had almost caught it; almost eased the clutch of grief that gripped at his heart like a deep tattoo. It held him gentler now.
Twenty laps
Much gentler.
More! Two more!
Much gentler
Powerful leg muscles blooded and stinging, rippling with a long and leonine grace, Karras thumped around a turn when he noticed someone sitting on a bench to- the side where he'd laid out his towel, sweater and pants: a middle-aged man in a floppy overcoat and pulpy, crushed felt hat. He seemed to be watching him. Was he? Yes head turning as Karras passed.
The priest accelerated, digging at the final lap with pounding strides that jarred the earth, then he slowed to a panting, gulping walk as he passed the bench without a glance, both hands pressed light to his chrobbing sides. The heave of his rock-muscled chest and shoulders stretched his T-shirt, distorting the stenciled word PHILOSOPHERS inscribed across the front in once-blade letters now faded to a hint by repeated washings.
The man in the overcoat stood up and began to approach him.

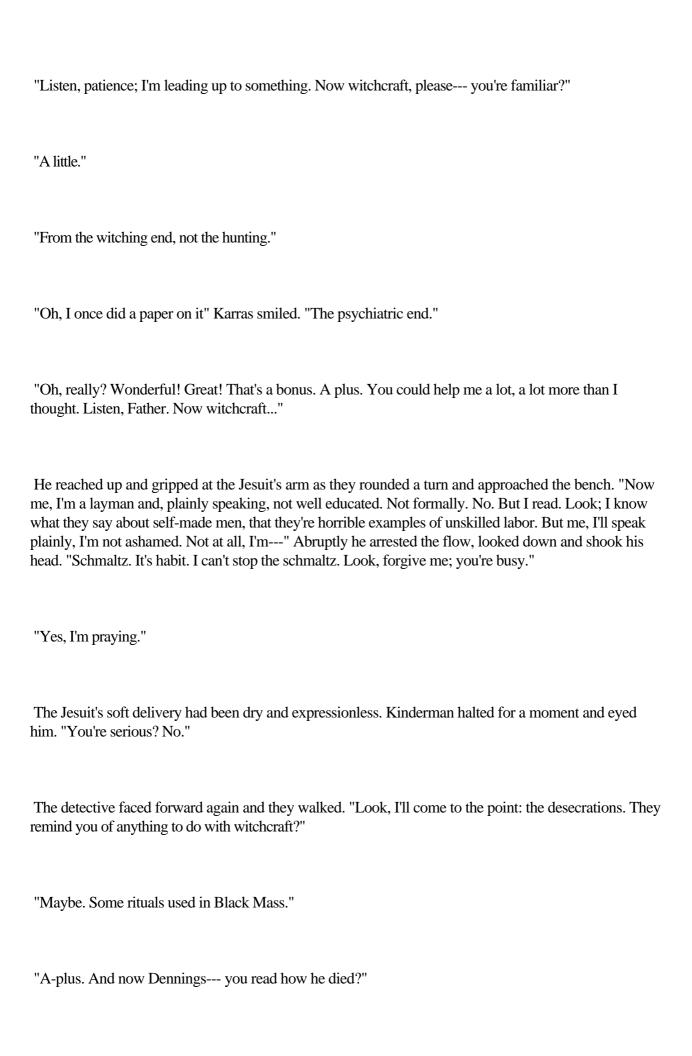
"Father Karras?" Lieutenant Kinderman called hoarsely.

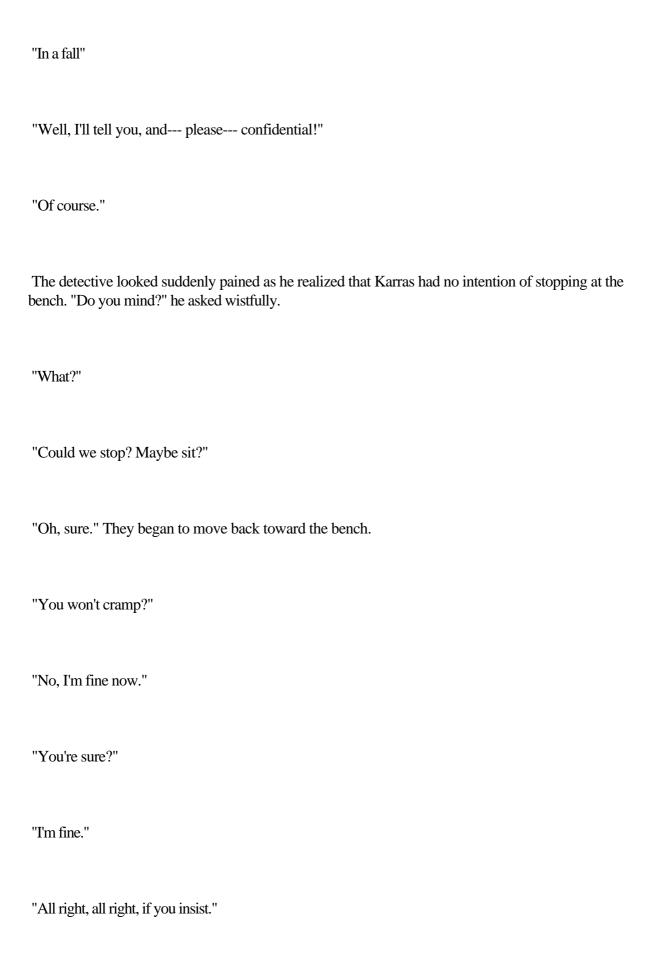
The priest turned around and nodded briefly, squinting into sunlight, waiting for Kinderman to reach him, then beckoned him along as once again he began to move. "Do you mind? I'll cramp," he panted.
"Yes, of course,"the detective answered, nodding with a wincing lack of enthusiasm as be tucked his hands into his pockets. The walk from the parking lot had tired him.
"Have have we met?" asked the Jesuit.
"No, Father. No, but they said that you looked like a boxer; some priest at the residence hall; I forget." He was tugging out his wallet. "So bad with names."
"And yours?"
"William Kinderman, Father." He flashed his identification. "Homicide."
"Really?" Karras scanned the badge and identification card with a shining, boyish interest. Flushed and perspiring, his face had an eager look of innocence as he turned to the waddling detective. "What's this about?"
"Hey, you know something, Father?" Kinderman answered, inspecting the Jesuit's rugged features. "It's true, you do look like a boxer. Excuse me; that scar, you know, there by your eye?" He was pointing. "Like Brando, it looks like, in Waterfront, just exactly Marlon Brando. They gave him a scar" he was illustrating, pulling at the corner of his eye "that made his eye look a little bit closed, just a little, made him look a little dreamy all the time, always sad. Well, that's you," he said, pointing. "You're Brando. People tell you that, Father?"
"No, they don't."
"Ever box?"
"Oh, a little."

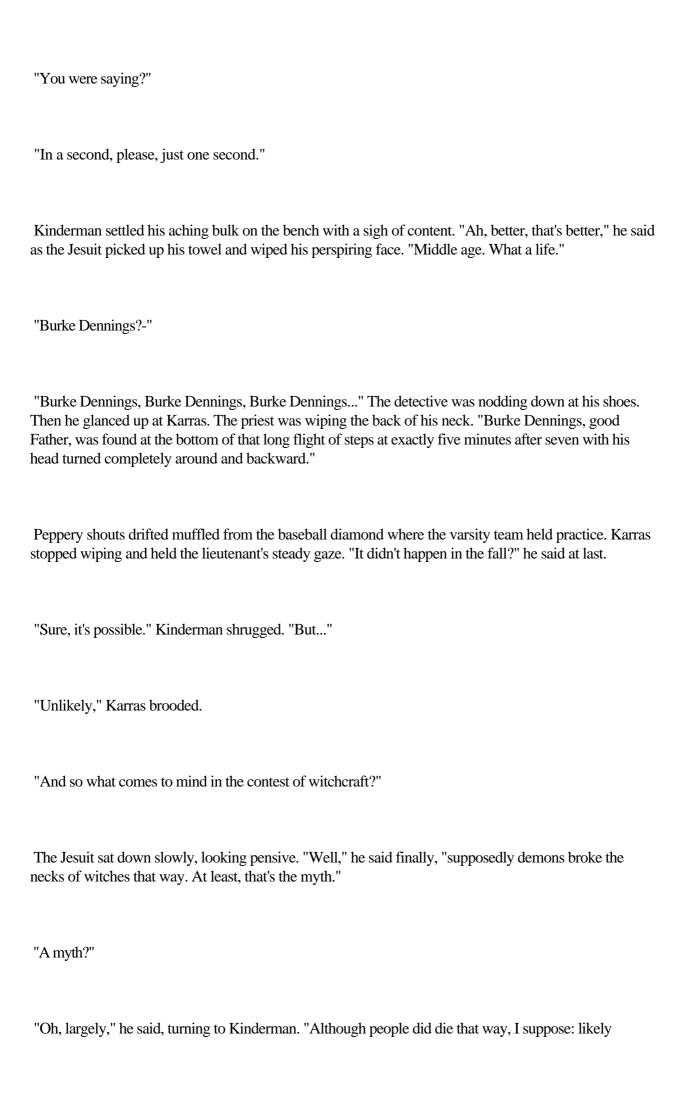




"Never mind, never mind, Marlon Brando; never mind. People tell you for a priest you're a little bit smart-ass?"
"Mea culpa," Karras murmured. Though he was smiling, he felt a regret that perhaps he'd diminished the man's self-esteem. He hadn't meant to. And now he felt glad of a chance to express a sincere perplexity. "I don't get it, though," he added, taking care that he wrinkled his brow. "What's the connection?"
"Look, Father, could we keep this between us? Confidential? Like a matter of confession, so to speak?"
"Of course." He was eyeing the detective earnestly. "What is it?"
"You know that director who was doing the film here, Father? Burke Dennings?"
"Well, I've seen him."
"You've seen him." The detective nodded. "You're also familiar with how he died?"
"Well, the papers" Karras shrugged again.
"That's just part of it."
"Oh?"
"Only part of it. Part. Just a part. Listen, what do you know on the subject of witchcraft?"
"What?"





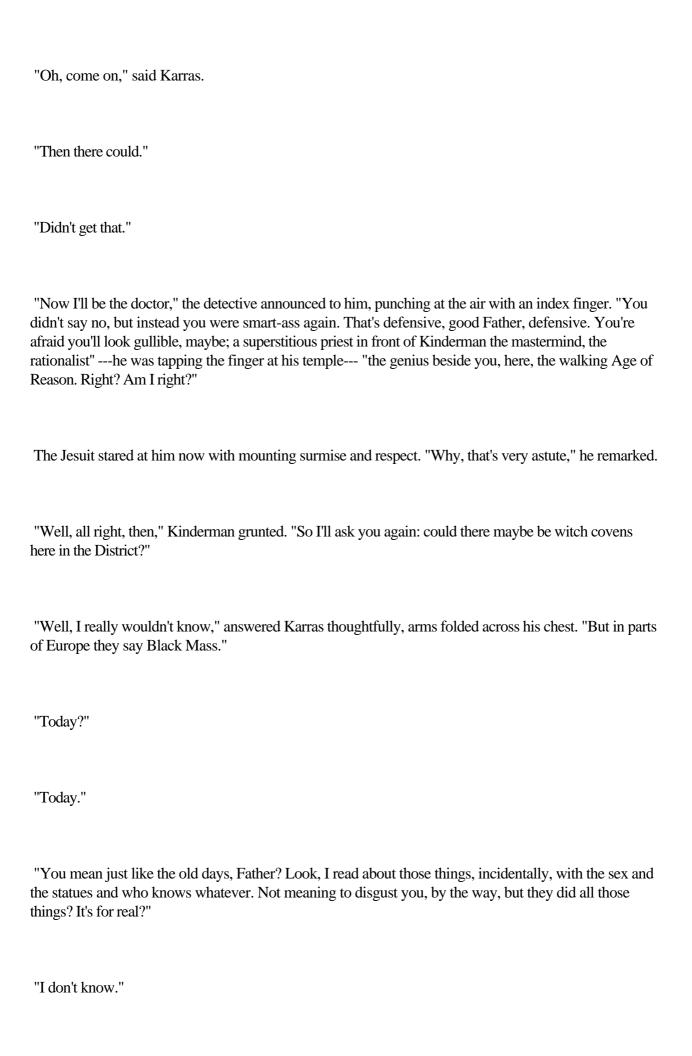


members of a coven who either defected or gave away secrets. That's just a guess. But I know it was a trademark of demonic assassins."
Kinderman nodded. "Exactly. Exactly. I remembered the connection from a murder in London. That's now. I mean, lately, just four or five years ago, Father. I remembered that I read it in the papers."
"Yes, I read it too, but I think it turned out to be some sort of hoax. Am I wrong?"
"No, that's right, Father, absolutely right. But in this case, at least, you can see some connection, maybe, with that and the things in the church. Maybe somebody crazy, Father, maybe someone with a spite against the Church. Some unconscious rebellion, perhaps"
"Sick priest," murmured Karras. "That it?"
"Listen, you re the psychiatrist, Father; you tell me."
"Well, of course, the desecrations are clearly pathological," Karras said thoughtfully, slipping on his sweater. "And if Dennings was murdered well, I'd guess that the killer's pathological too."
"And perhaps had some knowledge of witchcraft?"
"Could be."
"Could be," the detective grunted. "So who fits the bill, also lives in the neighborhood, and also has access in the night to the church?"
"Sick priest," Karras said, reaching out moodily beside him to a pair of sun-bleached khaki pants.
"Listen, Father, this is hard for you please! I understand. But for priests on the campus here,





Karras nodded.
"What's that thing on your shirt?" the detective asked him, motioning his head toward the Jesuit's chest.
"What thing?"
"On the T-shirt," the detective clarified. "The writing. 'Philosophers.' "
"Oh, I taught a few courses one year," said Karras, "at Woodstock Seminary in Maryland. I played on the lower-class baseball team. They were called the Philosophers.'"
"Ah, and the upper-class team?"
"Theologians."
Kinderman smiled and shook his head. "Theologians three, Philosophers two," he mused.
"Philosophers three, Theologians two."
"Of course."
"Of course."
"Strange things," the detective brooded. "Strange Listen, Father," he began on a reticent tack. "Listen, doctor Am I crazy, or could there be maybe a witch coven here in the District right now? Right today?"



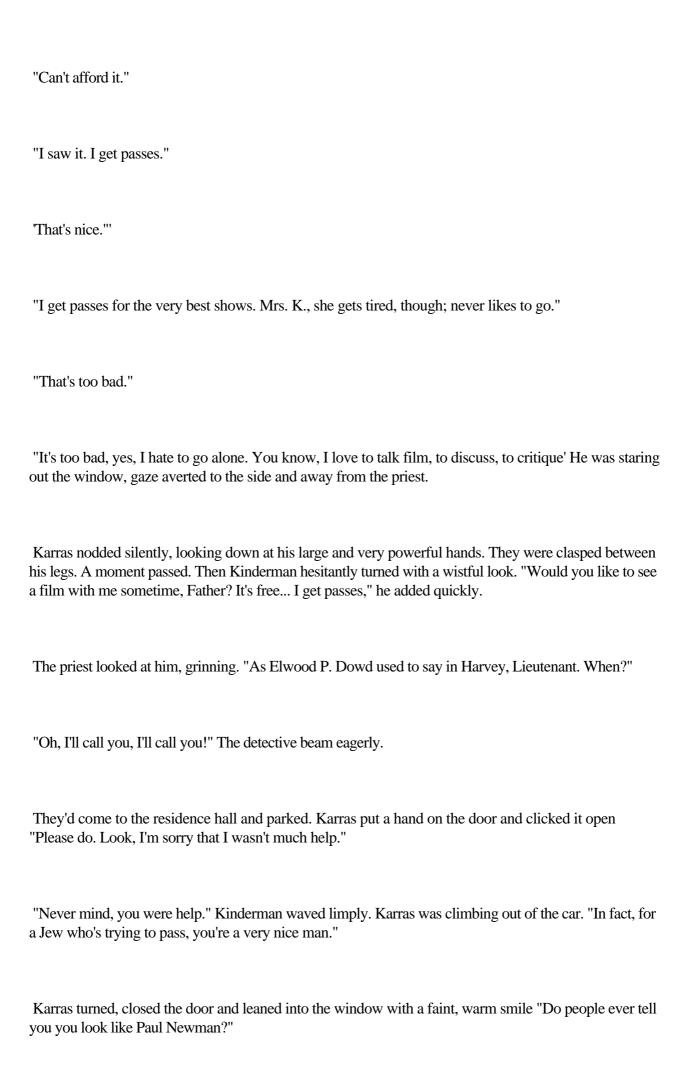


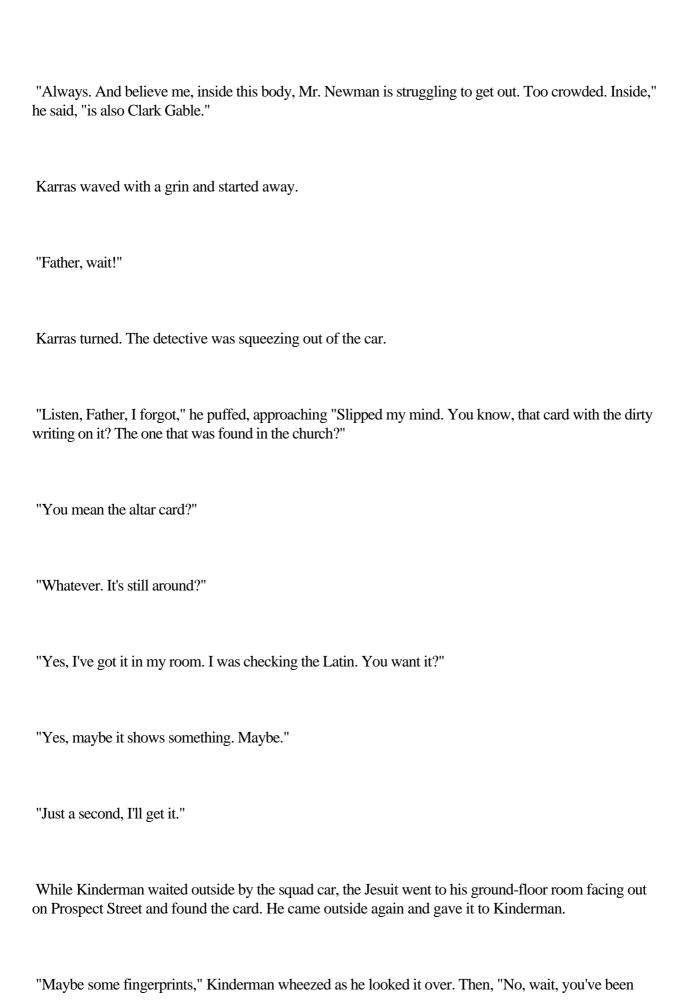
"Well, the sex, maybe so, maybe so. I can see. That's a whole other story altogether. Never mind. But the ritual murders now, Father? That's true? Now come on! Using blood from the newborn babies?" The detective was alluding to something else he had read in the book on witchcraft, describing how the unfrocked priest at Black Mass would at times slit the wrist of a newborn infant so that the blood poured into a chalice and later was consecrated and consumed in the form of communion. "That's just like the stories they used to tell about the Jews," the detective continued. "How they stole Christian babies and drank their blood. Look, forgive me, but your people told all those stories."











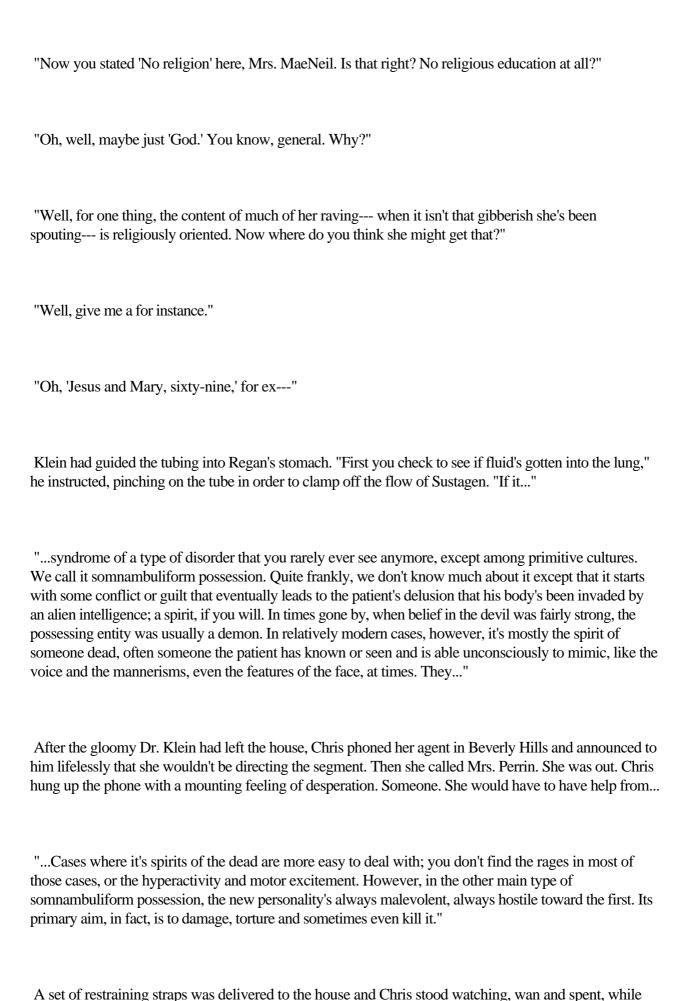








The campus clock boomed out the hour. It was 7:00 P.M.
At 7:23, Lieutenant Kinderman pondered a spectrographic analysis showing that the paint from Regan's sculpture matched a scraping of paint from the desecrated statue of the Virgin Mary.
And at 8:47, in a slum in the northeast section of the city, an impassive Karl Engstrom emerged from a rat-infested tenement house, walked three blocks south to a bus stop, waited alone for a minute, expressionless, then crumpled, sobbing, against a lamppost.
Lieutenant Kinderman, at the time, was at the movies.
CHAPTER SIX
On Wednesday, May 11, they were back in the house. They put Regan to bed, installed a lock on the shutters and stripped all the mirrors from her bedroom and bathroom.
"fewer and fewer lucid moments, and now there's a total blacking out of her consciousness during the fits, I'm afraid. That's new and would seem to eliminate genuine hysteria. In the meantime, a symptom or two in the area of what we call parapsychic phenomena have"
Dr. Klein came by, and Chris attended with Sharon as he drilled them in proper procedures for administering Sustagen feedings to Regan during her periods of coma. He inserted the nasogastric tubing. "First"
Chris forced herself to watch and yet not see her daughter's face; to grip at the words that the doctor was saying and push away others she'd heard at the clinic. They seeped through her consciousness like fog through the branches of a willow tree.



Karl affixed them to Regan's bed and then to her wrists. Then as Chris moved a pillow in an effort to center it under Regan's head, the Swiss straightened up and looked pityingly at the child's ravaged face. "She is going to be well?" he asked. A hint of some emotion had tinged his words; they were lightly italicized with concern. But Chris could not answer. As Karl was addressing her, she'd picked up an object that had been tucked under Regan's pillow. "Who put this crucifix here?" she demanded. "The syndrome is only the manifestation of some conflict, of some guilt, so we try to get at it, find out what it is. Well, the best procedure in a case like this is hypnotherapy; however, we can't seem to put her under. So then we took a shot at narcosynthesis--- that's a treatment that uses narcotics--- but, frankly, that looks like another dead end." "So what's next?"" "Mostly time, I'm afraid, mostly time. We'll just have to keep trying, and hope for a change. In the meantime, she's going to have to be hospitalized for a..." Chris found Sharon in the kitchen setting up her typewriter on the table. She had just brought it up from the basement playroom. Willie sliced carrots at the sink for a stew. "Was it you who put the crucifix under her pillow, Shar?" Chris asked with the strain of tension. "What do you mean?" asked Sharon, fuddled. "You didn't?"

"Chris, I don't even know what ybu're talking about. Look, I told you. I told you on the plane, all I've ever said to Rags is 'God made the world' and maybe things about---"

"Fine, Sharon, fine; I believe you, but---"

"Me, I don't put it," growled Willie defensively.
"Somebody put it there, dammit!" Chris erupted, then wheeled on Karl as he entered the kitchen and opened the refrigerator door. "Look, I'll ask you again," she gritted in a tone that verged on shrillness: "Did you put that crucifix under her pillow?"
"No, madam," he answered levelly. He was folding ice cubes into a face towel. "No. No cross."
"That fucking cross didn't just walk up there, damn you! One of you is lying!" She was shrieking with a rage that stunned the room. "Now you tell me who put it there, who" Abruptly she slumped to a chair and began to sob into trembling hands. "Oh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I don't know what I'm doing!" she wept. "Oh, my God, I don't know what I'm doing!"
Willie and Karl watched silently as Sharon came up beside her and kneaded her neck with a comforting hand. "Hey, okay. It's okay."
Chris wiped at her face with the back of a sleeve. "yeah, I guess whoever did it" she sniffled "was only trying to help."
"Look, I'm telling you again and you'd better believe it, I'm not about to put her in a goddam asylum!"
"It's"
"I don't care what you call it! I'm not letting her out of my sight!"
"Well, I'm sorry."
"Yeah, sorry! Christ! Fighty-eight doctors and all you can tell me with all of your bullshit is"

Chris smoked a cigarette, tamped it out nervously and went upstairs to look in on Regan. She opened the door. In the gloom of the bedroom, she made out a figure by Regan's bedside, sitting in a straight-backed wooden chair. Karl. What was he doing? she wondered.

As Chris moved closer, he chid not look up, but kept his gaze on the child's face. He had his arm outstretched and was touching it. What was in his hand? As Chris reached the bedside, she saw what it was: the improvised ice pack he had fashioned in the kitchen. Karl was cooling Regan's forehead.

Chris was touched, stood watching with surprise, and when Karl did not move or acknowledge her presence, she turned and quietly left the room.

She went to the kitchen, drank black coffee and smoked another cigarette. Then on an impulse she went to the study. Maybe... maybe...

"...an outside chance, since possession is loosely related to hysteria insofar as the origin of the syndrome is almost always autosuggestive. Your daughter must have known about possession, believed in possession, and known about some of its symptoms, so that now her unconscious is producing the syndrome. If that can be established, you might take a stab at a form of cure that's autosuggestive. I think of it as shock treatment in these cases, though most other therapists wouldn't agree, I suppose. Oh, well--- as I said, it's a very outside chance, and since you're opposed to your daughter being hospitalized, I'll---"

"Name it, for Gods sake! What is it?!"

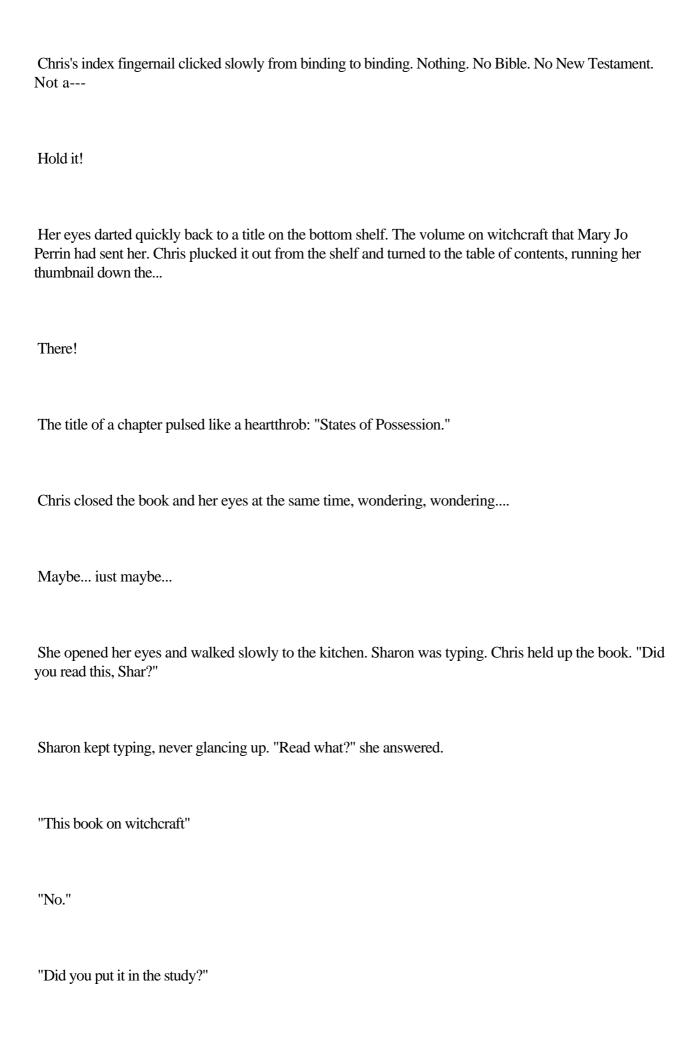
"Have you ever heard of exorcism, Mrs. MacNeil?"

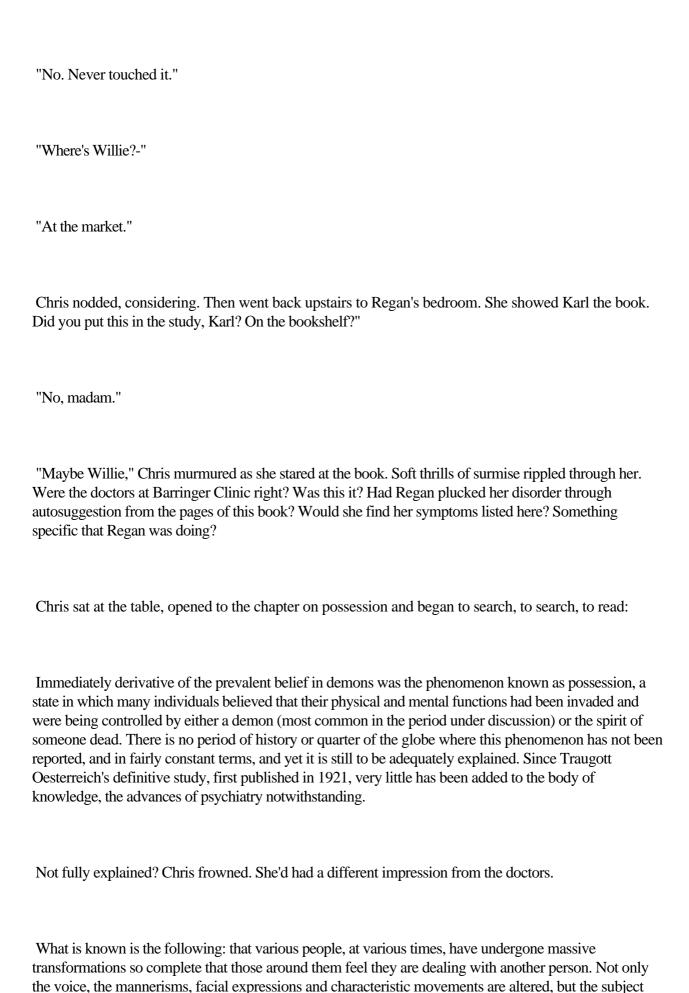
The books in the study were part of the furnishings and Chris was unfamiliar with them. Now she was scanning the titles, searching, searching....

"...stylized ritual now out of date in which rabbis and priests tried to drive out the spirit. It's only the Catholics who haven't discarded it yet, but they keep it pretty much in the closet as sort of an embarrassment, I think. But to someone who thinks that he's really possessed, I would say that the

ritual's rather impressive. It used to work, in fact, although not the reason they thought, of course; it was purely the -force of suggestion. The victim's belief in possession helped cause it, or at least the appearance of the a syndrome, and in just the same way his belief in the power of the exorcism can make it disappear. It's--- ah, you're frowning. Well, perhaps I should tell you about the Australian aborigines. They're convinced that if some wizard thinks a 'death ray' at them from a distance, why, they're definitely going to die, you see. And the fact is that they do! They just lie down and slowly die! And the only thing that saves them, at times, is a similar form of suggestion: a counteracting 'ray' by another wizard!"

that saves them, at times, is a similar form of suggestion: a counteracting 'ray' by another wizard!"
"Are you telling me to take her to a witch doctor?"
"Yes, I suppose that I'm saying just that: as a desperate measure, perhaps to a priest. That's a rather bizarre little piece of advice, I know, even dangerous, in fact, unless we can definitely ascertain whether Regan knew anything at all about possession, and particularly exorcism, before this all came on. Do you think she might have read it?"
"No, l don't."
"Seen a movie about it sometime? Something on television?"
"No."
"Read the gospels, perhaps? The New Testament?"
"Why?"
"There are quite a few accounts of possession in them; of exorcisms by Christ. The descriptions of the symptoms, in fact, are the same as in possession today. If you"
"Look, it's no good. Never mind, just forget it! That's all I need is to have her father hear that I called in a bunch of"





himself now thinks of himself as totally distinct from the original person and as having a name--- whether

human or demonic and separate history of its own
The symptoms. Where were the symptoms? Chris wondered impatiently.
In the Malay Archipelago, where possession is even today an everyday, common occurrence, the possessing spirit of someone dead often causes the possessed to mimic its gestures, voice and mannerisms so strikingly, that relatives of the deceased will burst into tears. But aside from so-called quasi-possession those cases that are ultimately reducible to fraud, paranoia and hysteria the problem has always lain with interpreting the phenomena, the oldest interpretation being the spiritist, an impression that is likely to be strengthened by the fact that the intruding personality may have accomplishments quite foreign to the first. In the demoniacal form of possession, for example, the "demon" may sneak in languages unknown to the first personality, or
There! Something! Regan's gibberish! An attempt at a language? She read on quickly.
or manifest various parapsychic phenomena, telekinesis for example: the movement of objects without application of material force.
The rappings? The flinging up and down on the bed?
In cases of possession by the dead, there are manifestations such as Oesterreich's account of a monk who, abruptly, while possessed, became a gifted and brilliant dancer although he had never, before his possession, had occasion to dance so much as a step. So impressive, at times, are these manifestations that Jung, the psychiatrist, after studying a case at first hand, could offer only partial explanation far what he was certain could "not have been fraud"
Worrisome. The tone of this was worrisome.
and William James, the greatest psychologist that America has ever produced, resorted to positing "the plausibility of the spiritualist interpretation of the phenomenon" after closely studying the so-called "Watseka Wonder," a teenaged girl in Watseka, Illinois, who became indistinguishable in personality from a girl named Mary Roff who had died in a state insane asylum twelve years prior to the possession

Frowning, Chris did not hear the doorbell chime; did not hear Sharon stop typing to rise and go answer it.
The demoniacal form of possession is usually thought to have had its origin in early Christianity; yet in fact both possession and exorcism pre-date the time of Christ. The ancient Egyptians as well as the earliest civilizations of the Tigris and the Euphrates believed that physical and spiritual disorders were caused by invasion of the body by demons. The following, for example, is the formula for exorcism against maladies of children in ancient Egypt: "Go hence, thou who comest in darkness, whose nose is turned backwards, whose face is upside down. Hast thou come to kiss this child? I will not let the"
"Chris?"
She kept reading, absorbed. "Shar, I'm busy."
"There's a homicide detective wants to see you."
"Oh, Christ, Sharon, tell him to"
She stopped.

What am I waiting for? Chris wondered. She sat on expectancy that was known yet undefined, like the vivid dream one can never remember.

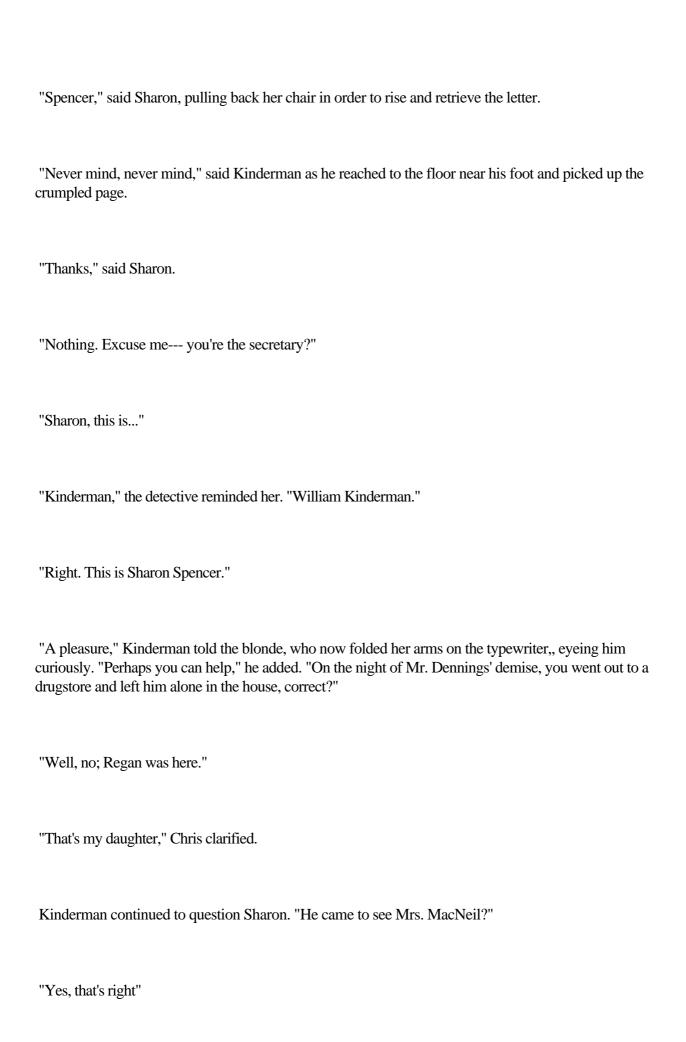
"No, no, hold it." Chris frowned, still staring at the book. "No. Tell him to come in. Let him in."

Sound of walking.

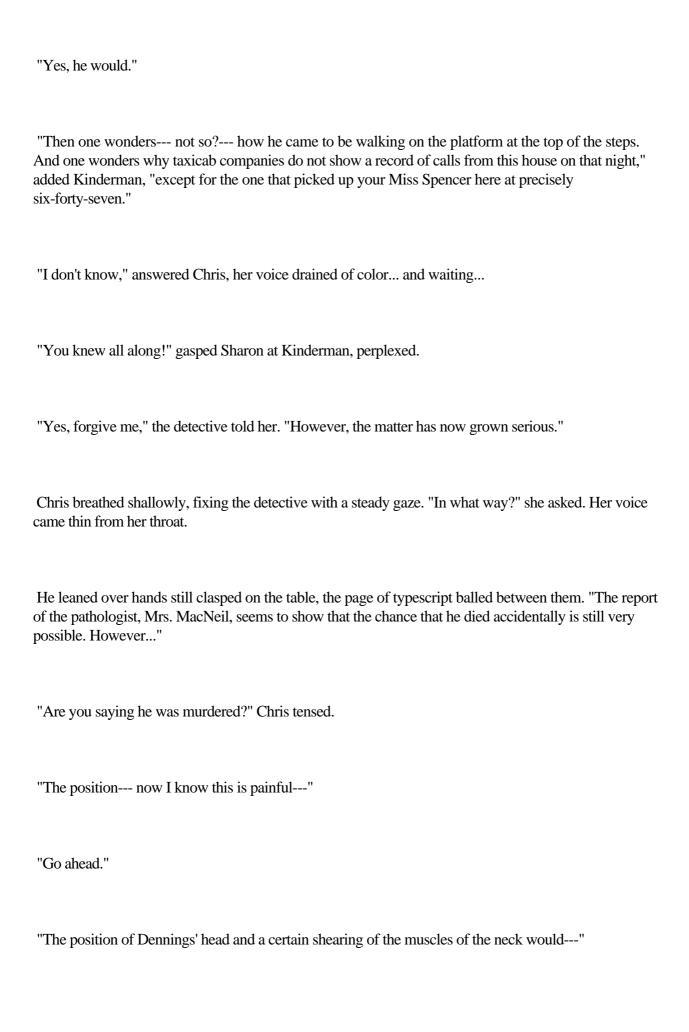
Sound of waiting.











"Oh, God!" Chris winced.
"Yes, it's painful. I'm sorry; I'm terribly sorry. But you see, this condition we can skip the detailsbut it never could happen, you see, unless Mr. Dennings had fallen some distance before he hit the steps; for example, some twenty or thirty feet before he went rolling down to the bottom. So a clear possibility, plainly speaking, is maybe Well, first let me ask you"
He'd turned now to a frowning Sharon. "When you left, he was where, Mr. Dennings? With the child?"
"No, down here in the study. He was fixing a drink."
"Might your daughter remember" he turned to Chris "if perhaps Mr. Dennings was in her room that night?"
Has she ever been alone with him?
"Why do you ask?"
"Might your daughter remember?"
"No, I told you before, she was heavily sedated and"
"Yes, yes, you told me; that's true; I recall it; but perhaps she awakened not so? and"
"No chance. And"
"She was also sedated," he interrupted, "when last we spoke?"



"Just Burke," Chris answered. Why?"

The detective lowered his head and shook it, frowning at the crumpled paper in his hands. "Strange... so baffling." He exhaled wearily. "Baffling." Then he lifted his glance to Chris. "The deceased comes to visit, stays only twenty minutes without even seeing you, and leaves all alone here a very sick girl. And speaking plainly, Mrs. MacNeil, as you say, it's not likely he would fall from a window. Besides that, a fall wouldn't do to his neck what we found except maybe a chance in a thousand." He nodded with his head of the book on witchcraft. "You've read in that book about ritual murder?"

Some perscience chilling her, Chris shook her head

"Maybe not in that book," he said. "However--- forgive me; I mention this only so maybe you'll think just a little bit harder--- poor Mr. Dennings was discovered with his neck wrenched around in the style of ritual murder by so-called demons, Mrs. MacNeil."

Chris went white.

"Some lunatic killed Mr. Dennings," the detective continued, eyeing Chris fixedly. "At first, I never told you to spare you the hurt. And besides, it could technically still be an accident. But me, I don't think so. My hunch. My opinion. I believe he was killed by a powerful man: point one. And the fracturing of his skull--- point two--- plus the various things I have mentioned, would make it very probable--- probable, not certain--- the deceased was killed and then afterward pushed from your daughter's window. But no one was here except your daughter. So how could this be? It could be one way: if someone came calling between the time Miss Spencer left and the time you returned. Not so? Maybe so. Now I ask you again, please: who might have come?"

"Judas priest, just a second!" Chris whispered hoarsely, still in shock.

"Yes, I'm sorry. It's painful. And perhaps I'm wrong--- I'll admit. But you'll think now? Who? Tell me who might have come?"

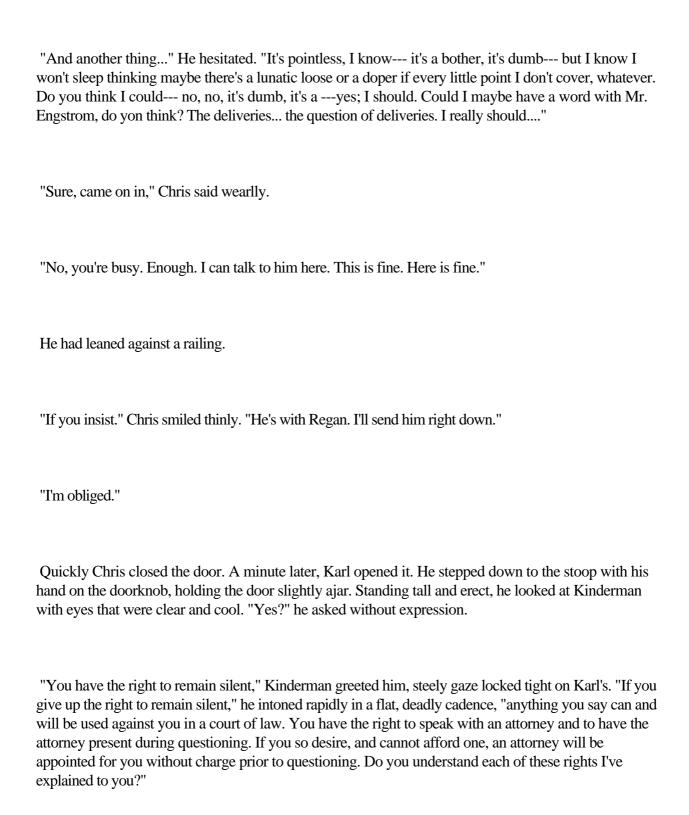
Chris had her head down, frowning in thought. Then she looked up at Kinderman. "No. No, there's no one."



"Mr. Dennings was not to speak ill of the dead, may he rest in peace but as you said, in his cups he was somewhat well, call it irascible: capable, doubtless, of provoking an argument; an anger; in this case a rage from perhaps a delivery man who came by to drop a package. So were you expecting something? Like dry cleaning, maybe? Groceries? Liquor? A package?"
"I really wouldn't know," Chris told him. "Karl handles all of that."
"Oh, I see."
"Want to ask him?"
The detective sighed and leaned back from the table, stuffing his hands in the pockets of his coat. He stared glumly at the witchcraft book. "Never mind, never mind; it's remote. You've got a daughter very sick, and well, never mind." He made a gesture of dismissal and rose from the chair. "Very nice to have met you, Miss Spencer."
"Same here." Sharon nodded remotely.
"Baffling," said Kinderman with a headshake. "Strange." He was focused on some inner thought. Then he looked at Chris as she rose from her chair. "Well, I'm sorry. I've bothered you for nothing. Forgive me."
"Here, I'll walk you to the door," Chris told him,, thoughtful.
"Don't bother."
"No bother."
"If you insist. Incidentally," he said as they moved from the kitchen, "just a chance in a million, I know, but your daughter you could possibly ask her if she saw Mr. Dennings in her room that night?"

	Chris walked with folded arms. "Look, he wouldn't have had a reason to be up there is the first place."
	"I know that; I realize; that's true; but if certain British doctors never asked, 'What's this fungus?' we wouldn't today have penicillin. Right? Please ask. You'll ask?"
	'When she's well enough, yes; I'll ask."
	"Couldn't hurt. In the meantime" They'd come to the front door and Kinderman faltered, embarrassed. He put fingertips to mouth in a hesistant gesture. "Look, I really hate to ask you; however"
	Chris tensed for some new shock, the prescience tingling again in her bloodstream "What?"
	"For my daughter you could maybe give an autograph?" He'd reddened, and Chris almost laughed with relief; at herself; at despair and the human condition.
	"Oh, of course. Where's a pencil?" she said.
	"Right her!" he responded instantly, whippeng out the stub of a chewed-up pencil from the pocket of his coat while he dipped his other hand in a pocket of his jacket and slipped out a calling card. "She would love it," he said as he handed them both to Chris.
7	"What's her name?" Chris asked, pressing the card against the door and poising the pencil stub to write. There followed a weighty hesitation. She heard only wheezing. She glanced around. In Kinderman's eyes she saw some massive, terrible struggle.
	"I lied," he said finally, his eyes at once desperate and defiant. "It's for me."
	He fixed his gaze on the card and blushed. "Write 'To William William Kinderman' it's spelled on the back."





Birds twittered softly in the branches of the elder tree, and the traffic sounds of M Street came up to them muted like the humming of bees from a distant meadow. Karl's gaze never wavered as he answered, "Yes."



"I did."
"Not before?"
"No, I see entire film."
"And leaving the theater, you boarded the D.C. Transit bus is front of the theater, debarking at M Street and Wisonsin Avenue at approximately nine-twenty P.M.?"
"Yes."
"And walked home?"
"I walk home."
"And were back in this residence at approximately nine-thirty P.M.?"
"I am back here exactly nine-thirty," Karl answered.
"You're sure."
"Yes, I look at my watch. I am positive."
"And you saw the whole film to the very end?"

"Yes, I said that."
"Your answers are being electronically recorded, Mr. Engstrom. I want you to be absolutely positive."
"I am positive."
"You're aware of the altercation between an usher and a drunken patron that happened in the last minutes of the film?"
"Yes."
"Can you tell me the cause of it?"
"The man, he was drunk and was making disturbance."
"And what did they do with him finally?"
"Out. They throw him out."
"There was no such disturbance. Are you also aware that during the course of the six o'clock showing a technical breakdown lasting approximately fifteen minutes caused an interruption in the showing of the film?"
"I am not."
"You recall that the audience booed?"

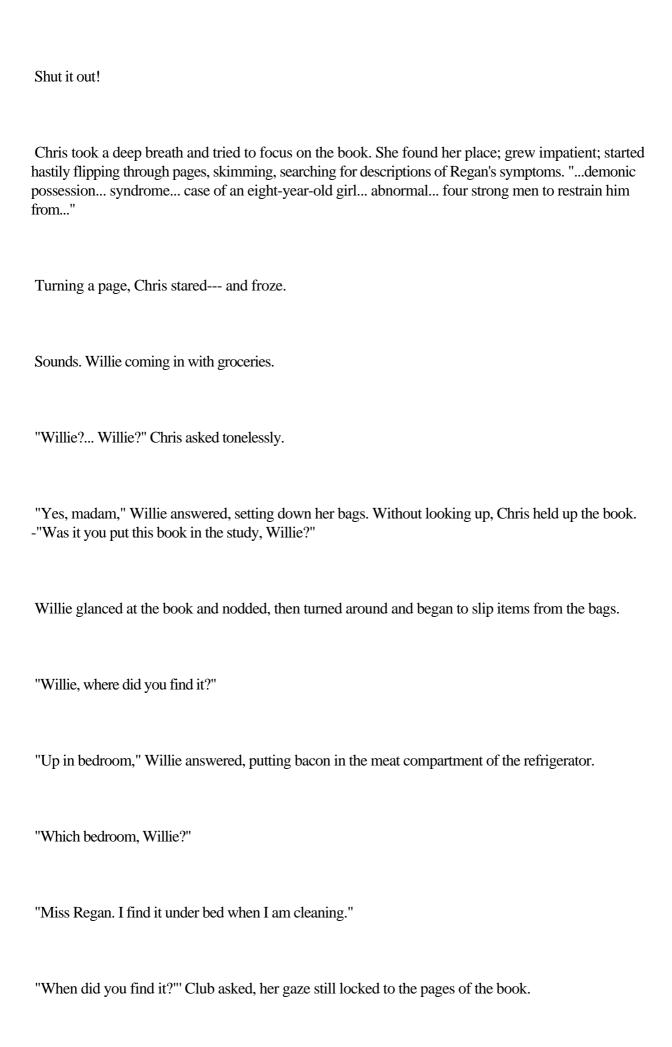


The detective made no answer but continued to eye him, unblinking, and when Karl seemed again about to speak, the detective abruptly pushed away from the railing, moving toward the squad car with hands in his pocket. He walked unhurriedly, viewing his surroundings to the left and the right like an interested visitor to the city. From the stoop, Karl watched, his features stolid and impassive as Kinderman open the door of the squad car, reached inside to a box of Klennex fixed to the dashboard, extracted a tissue and blew his nose while staring idly across the river as if considering where to have lunch. Then he entered the car without glancing back. As the car pulled away and rounded the corner of Thirty-fifth, Karl looked at the hand that was not on the doorknob and saw it was trembling. When she heard the front door being closed, Chris was brooding at the bar in the study, pouring out a Vodka over ice. Footsteps. Karl going up the stairs. She picked up her vodka and moved slowly back toward the kitchen, stirring her drink with an index finger; picking her way with absent eyes. Something... something was horribly wrong. Like light from a room leaking under the door, a glow of dread seeped into the darkened hall of her mind. What lay behind the door? What was it? Don't look! She entered the kitchen, sat at the table and sipped at her drink. "I believe he was killed by a powerful man..." She dropped her glance to the book on witchcraft. Something...

Footsteps. Sharon returning from Regan's bedroom. Entering. Sitting at the table by the typewriter.

Cranking fresh stationery into the roller.
Something
"Pretty creepy," Sharon murmured, fingertips resting on the keyboard and eyes on her steno notes to the side.
No answer. Uneasiness hung in the room. Chris sipped absently at her drink.
Sharon probed at the silence in a strained, low voice. "They've got an awful lot of hippie joints down around M Street and Wisconsin. Pot-heads. Occultists. The police call them 'hellhounds.' "She paused as if waiting for comment, her eyes still fixed upon the notes; then continued: "I wonder if Burke might have"
"Oh, Christ, Shar! Forget about it, will you!" Chris erupted. "I've got all I can think about with Rags! Do you mind?" She had her eyes shut. She clenched the book.
Sharon returned instantly to the keys of the typewriter, clicking off words at a furious tempo for a minute, then abruptly bolted up from her chair and out of the kitchen. "I'm going for a walk!" she said icily.
"Stay the hell away from M Street!" Chris rumbled at her moodily, her gaze on the book over folded arms.
"I Will!"
"And N!"
Chris heard the front door being opened, then closed. She sighed. Felt a pang of regret. But the flurry

Chris heard the front door being opened, then closed. She sighed. Felt a pang of regret. But the flurry had siphoned off tension. Not all. Still the glow in the hall. Very faint.





crashing like a boulder to the floor with her daughter crying, "No! Oh, no, dont! Oh, no, please!" and Karl bellowing--- No! No, not Karl! Someone else! A thundering bass that was threatening, raging!

Chris plunged down the hall and burst into the bedroom, gasped, stood rooted in paralyzing shock as the rappings boomed massively, shivering through walls; as Karl lay unconscious on the floor near the bureau; as Regan, her legs propped up and spread wide on a bed that was violently bouncing and shaking, clutched the bone-white crucifix in raw knuckled hands; the bone-white crucifix poised at her vagina, the bone-white crucifix she stared at with terror, eyes bulging in a face that was bloodied from the nose, the naso-gastric tubing ripped out.

"Oh, Please! Oh, no, please!" she was shrieking as her hands brought the crucifix closer; as she seemed to be straining to push it away.

"You'll do as I tell you, fifth! You'll do it!"

The threatening bellow, the words, came from Regan, her voice coarse and guttural, bristling with venom, while in an instantaneous flash her expression and features were hideously transmuted into those of the feral, demonic personality that had appeared in the course of hypnosis. And now faces and voices, as Chris watched stunned, interchanged with rapidity:

"No!"

"You'll do it!"

"Please!"

"You will, you bitch, or I'll kill you!"

"Please!"

"Yes, you're going to let Jesus fuck you, fuck you, f---"

Regan now, eyes wide and staring, flinching from the rush of some hideous finality, mouth agape shrieking at the dread of some ending. Then abruptly the demonic face once more possessed her, now filled her, the room choking suddenly with a stench in the nostrils, with an icy cold that seeped from the walls as the rappings ended and Regan's piercing cry of terror turned to a guttural, yelping laugh of malevolent spite and rage triumphant while she thrust down the crucifix into her vagina and began to masturbate ferociously, roaring in that deep, coarse, deafening voice, "Now your're mine, now you're mine, you stinking cow! You bitch! Let Jesus fuck you, fuck you!"

Chris stood rooted to the ground in horror, frozen, her hands pressing tight against her cheeks as again the demonic, loud laugh cackled joyously, as Regan's vagina gushed blood onto sheets with her hymen, the tissues ripped. Abruptly, with a shriek clawing raw from her throat, Chris rushed at the bed, grasped blindly at the crucifix, was still screaming as Regan flared up at her in fury, features contorted infernally, reached out a hand, clutching Chris's hair, and yanked her head down, pressing her face hard against her vagina, smearing it with blood while she frantically undulated her pelvis.

"Aahhh, little pig mother!" Regan crooned with a guttural, rasping, throaty eroticism. "Lick me, lick me, lick me! Aahhhhh!" Then the hand that was holding Chris's head down jerked it upward while the other arm smashed her a blow across the chest that sent Chris reeling across the room and crashing to a wall with stunning force while Regan laughed with bellowing spite.

Chris crumpled to the floor in a daze of horror, in a swirling of images, sounds in the room, as her vision spun madly, blurring, unfocused, her ears ringing loud with chaotic distortions as she tried to raise herself, was too weak, faltered, then looked toward the still-blurred bed, toward Regan with her back to her, thrusting the crucifix gently and sensually into her vagina, then out, then in, with that deep, bass voice crooning, "Ah, there's my sow, yes, my sweet honey piglet, my Piglet, my---"

The words were cut off as Chris started crawling painfully toward the bed with her face smeared with blood, with her eyes still unfocused, limbs aching, past Karl. Then she cringed; shrinking bade in incredulous terror as she thought she saw hazily, in a swimming fog, her daughter's head turning slowly around on a motionless torso, rotating monstrously, inexorably, until at last it seemed facing backward.

"Do you know what she did, your cunting daughter?" giggled an elfin familiar voice.

Chris blinked at the mad-staring, grinning face, at the cracked, parched lips and foxlike eyes.

She screamed until she fainted.
(End of part two * Scanned and fully proofed by nihua)
III: The Abyss
They said, "What sign can you give us to see, so that we may believe you?"John 6: 30-31
A [Vietnam] brigade commander once ran a contest to rack up his unit's 10,000th kill; the prize was a week of luxury in the colonel's own quartersNewsweek, 1969
You do not believe although you have seen John 6: 36-37
CHAPTER ONE
She was standing on the Key Bridge walkway, arms atop the parapet, fidgeting, waiting, while homeward-bound traffic stuttered thickly behind her, while drivers with everyday cares honked horns and bumpers nudged bumpers with scraping indifference. She had reached Mary Jo; told her lies.

"Regan's fine. By the way, I've been thinking of another little dinner party. What was the name of that Jesuit psychiatrist again? I thought maybe I'd include him in the..."

Laughter floating up from below her: a blue-jeaned young couple in a rented canoe. With a quick, nervous gesture, she flicked ash from her cigarette and glanced up the walkway of the bridge toward the District. Someone hurrying toward her: khaki pants and blue sweater; not a priest; not him. She looked down at the river again, at her helplessness swirling in the wake of the bright-red canoe. She could make out the name on its side: Caprice.

Footsteps. The man in the sweater coming closer, slowing down as he reached her. Peripherally, she saw him rest a forearm on the top of the parapet and quickly she averted her head toward Virginia.

"Keep movin', creep," she rumbled at him huskily, flipping her cigarette into the river, "or, I swear to Christ, I'll yell for a cop!"

"Miss MacNeil? I'm Father Karras."

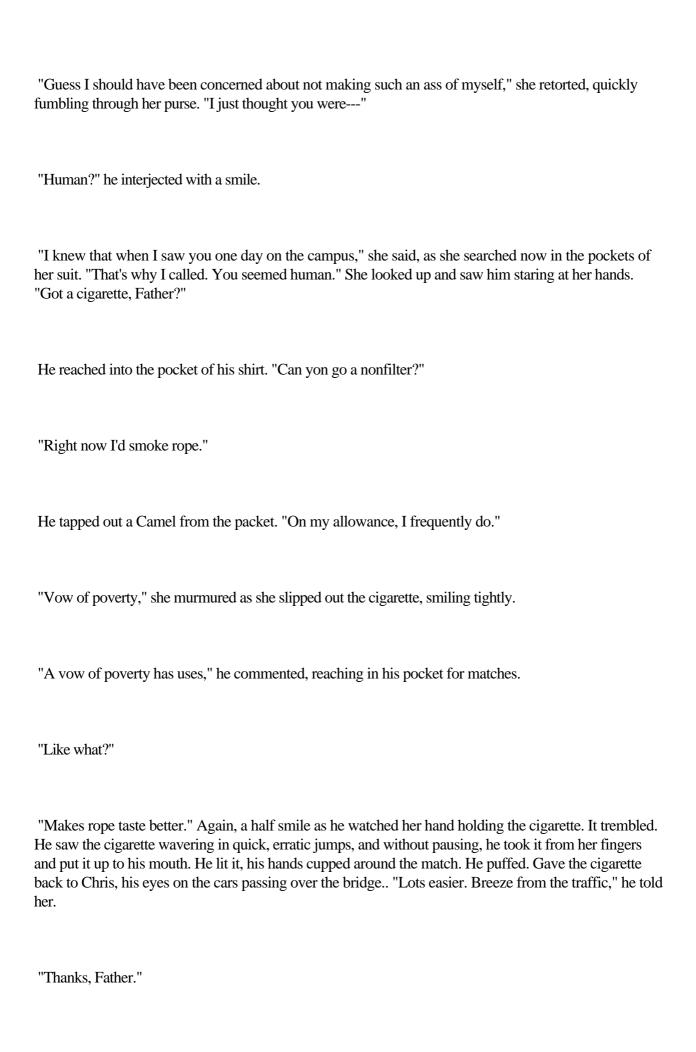
She started, reddened, jerked swiftly around The chipped, rugged face. "Oh, my God! Oh, I'm---Jesus!"

She was tugging at her sunglasses, flustered, and immediately pushing them back as the sad, dark eyes probed hers.

"I should have told you that I wouldn't be in uniform. Sorry."

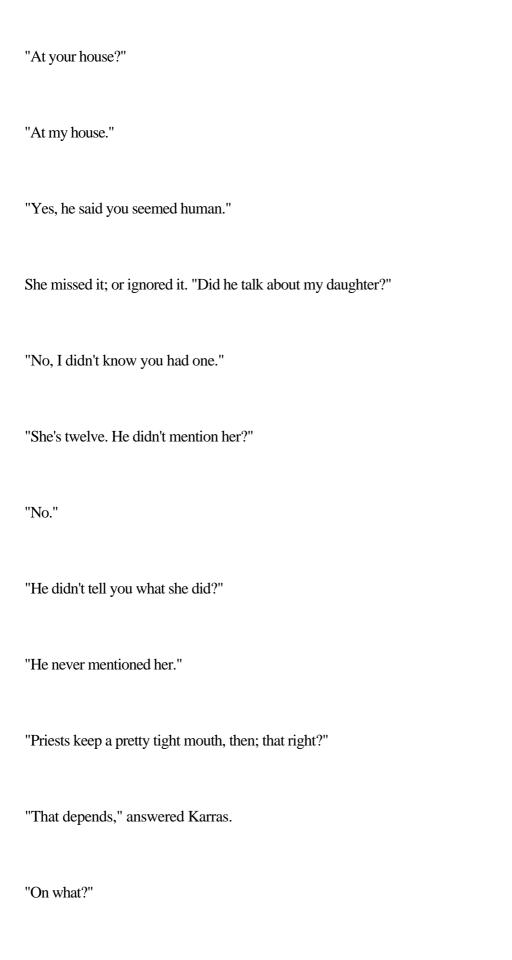
His voice was cradling, stripping her of burden, as his powerful hands clasped gently together. They were large and yet sensitive: veined Michelangelos. Chris felt her gaze somehow drawn to them instantly.

"I thought it would be much less conspicuous," he continued. "You seemed so concerned about keeping this quiet."



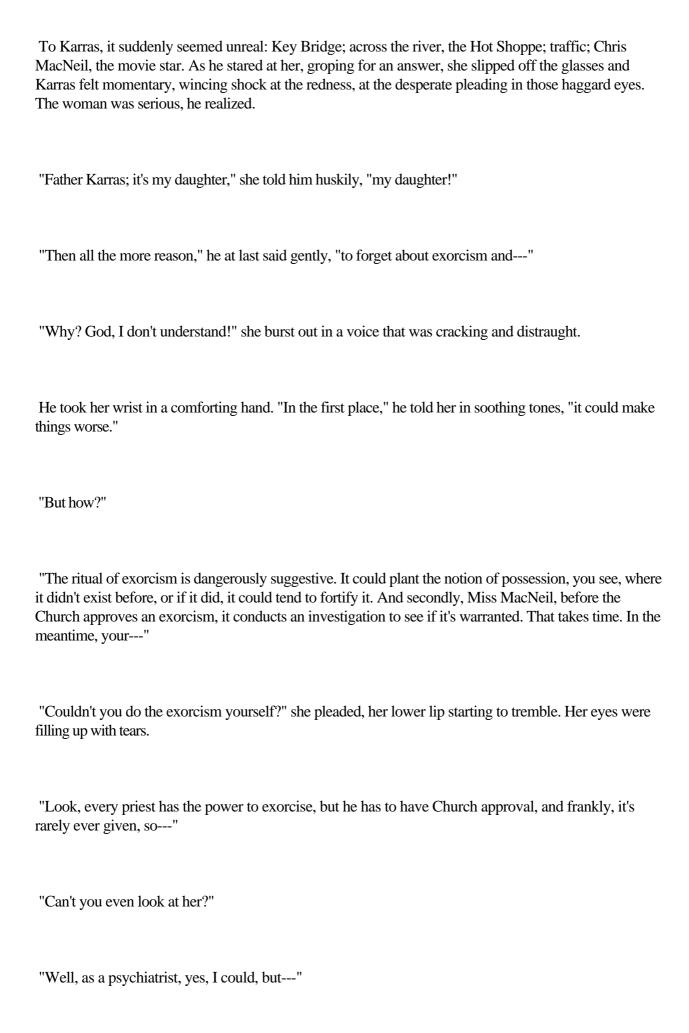


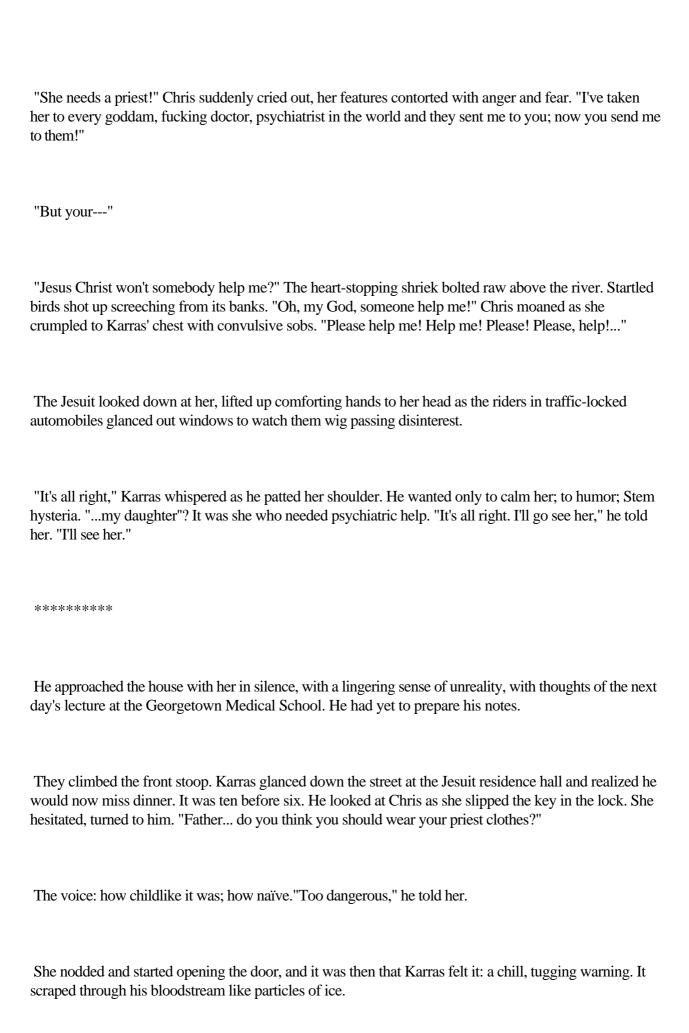
"Oh, I see."
"The Society sent me through medical school and through psychiatric training."
"Where?"
"Oh, well, Harvard; Johns Hopkins; Bellevue."
He was suddenly aware that he wanted to impress her. Why? he wondered; and immediately saw the answer in the slums of his boyhood; in the balconies of theaters on the Lower East Side. Little Dimmy with a movie star.
"Not bad," she said appraisingly, nodding her head.
"We don't take vows of mental poverty."
She sensed an irritation; shrugged; turned front, facing out to the river. "Look, it's just that I don't know you, and" She dragged on the cigarette, long and deep, and then exhaled, crushing out the butt on the parapet. "You're a friend of Father Dyer's, that right?"
"Yes, I am."
"Pretty close?"
"Pretty close."
"Did he talk about the party?"

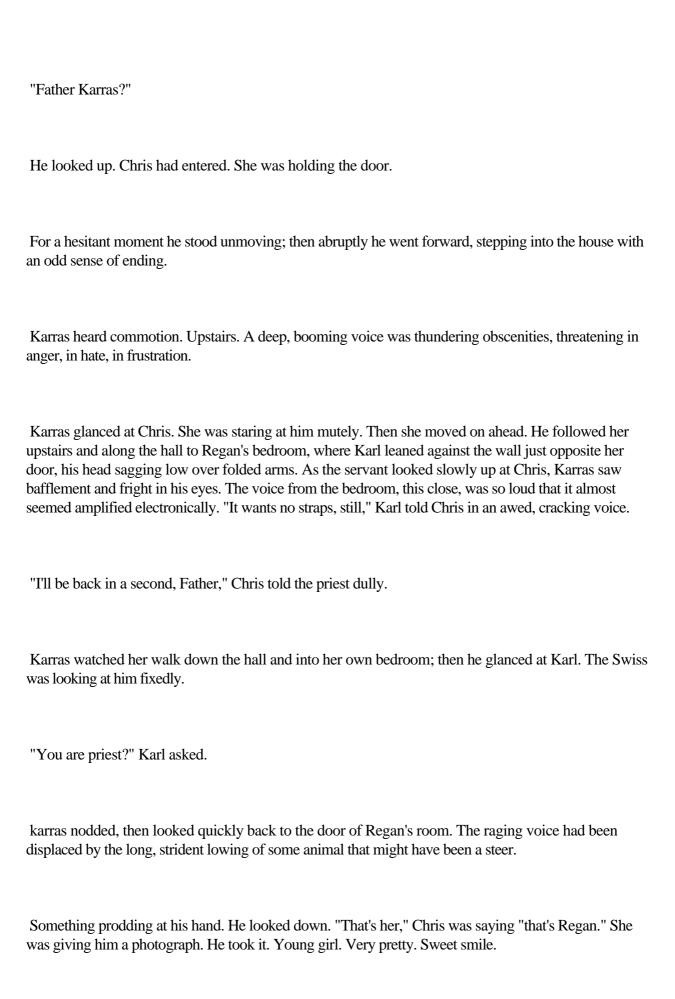


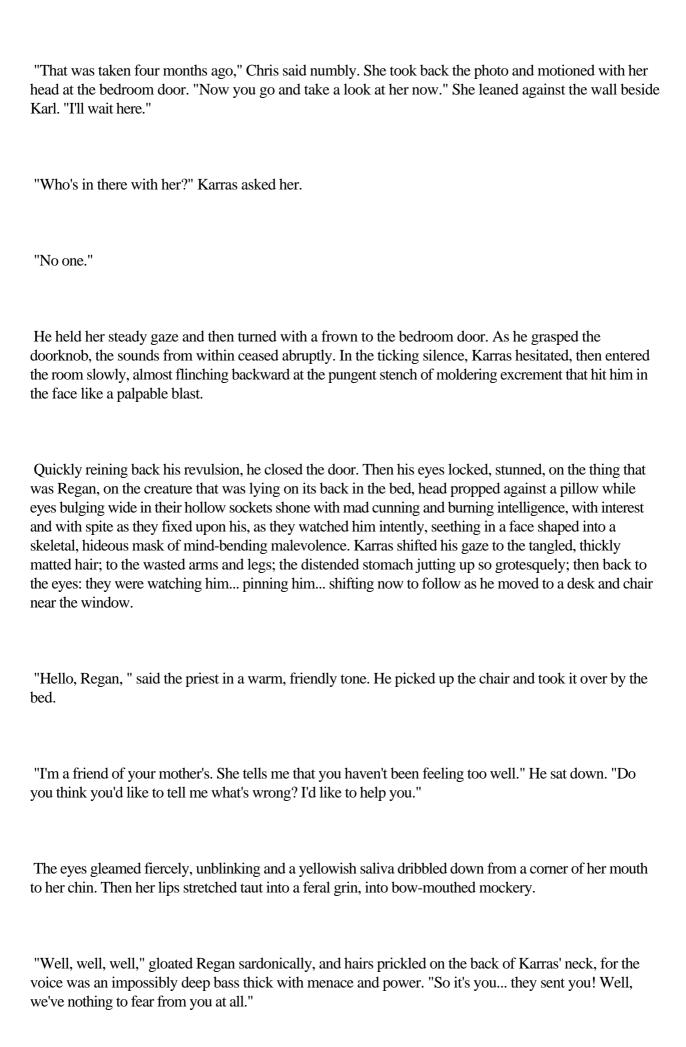












"Yes, that's right. I'm your friend. I'd like to help," said Karras.
"You might looses these straps, then," Regan croaked. She had tugged up her wrists so that now Karras noticed that they were bound with a double set of restraining straps.
"Are they uncomfortable for you?" he asked her.
"Extremely. They're a nuisance. An infernal nuisance." The eyes glinted slyly with secret amusement.
Karras saw the scratch marks on her face; the cuts on her lips where apparently she'd bitten them. "I'm afraid you might hurt yourself, Regan."
"I'm not Regan," she rumbled, still with the hideous grin that now seemed to Karras to be her permanent expression. How incongruous, the braces on her teeth looked, he reflected.
"Oh, I see. Well, then, maybe we should introduce ourselves. I'm Damien Karras," said the priest. "Who are you?"
"I'm the devil."
"Ah, good, very good." Karras nodded approvingly. "Now we can talk."
"A little chat?"
"If you like."

"Very good for the soul. However, you will find that I cannot talk freely while bound with these straps. I'm accustomed to gesturing." Regan drooled. "As you know, I've client much of my time in Rome, dear Karras. Now kindly undo the straps!"
What precocity of language and thought, mused Karras. He leaned forward in his chair with professional interest "You say you're the devil?" he asked.
"I assure you."
"Then why don't you just make the straps disappear?"
"That's much too vulgar a display of power, Karras. Too crude. After all, I'm a prince!" A chuckle. "I much prefer persuasion, Karras; togetherness; community involvement. Moreover, if I loosen the straps myself, my friend, I deny you the opportunity of performing a charitable act."
"But a charitable act," said Karras, "is a virtue and that's what the devil would want to prevent; so in fact I'd be helping you now if I didn't undo the straps. Unless, of course" he shrugged "you're really not really the devil. And in that case, perhaps I would undo the straps."
"How very foxy of you, Karras. If only dear Herod were here to enjoy this."
"Which Herod?" asked Kum with narrowed eyes. Was she punning on Christ's calling Herod "that fox"? "There were two. Are you talking about the King of Judea?"
"The tetrarch of Galilee!" she blasted him with anger and scorching contempt; then abruptly she was grinning again, cajoling in that sinister voice: "There, you see how these damnable straps have upset me? Undo then. Undo them and I'll tell you the future."
"Very tempting."
"My forte."





"I will show you! I will read your mind!" it seethed furiously. "Think of a number between one and ten!"
"No, that wouldn't prove a thing. I would have to see Regan."
Abruptly it chuckled, leaning back against the headboard. "No, nothing would prove anything at all to you, Karras. How splendid. How splendid indeed! In the meantime, we shall try to keep you properly beguiled. After all, now, we would not wish to lose you."
"Who is 'we'?" Karras probed with alert, quick in-terest.
"We are quite a little group in the piglet," it said, nodding. "Ah, yes, quite a stunning little multitude. Later I may see about discreet introductions. In the meantime, I am suffering from a maddening itch that I cannot reach. Would you loosen one strap for a moment, Karras?"
"No; just tell me where it itches and I'll scratch it."
"Ah, sly, very sly!"
"Show me Regan and perhaps I'll undo one strap," offered Karras. "If"
Abruptly he flinched in shock as he found himself staring into eyes filled with terror, at a mouth gaping wide in a soundless shriek for help.
But then quickly the Regan identity vanished in a blurringly rapid remolding of features. "Won't you take off these straps?" asked a wheedling voice in a clipped British accent.
In a flash, the demonic personality returned. "Couldjya help an old altar boy, Faddah?" it croaked, and then threw back its head in laughter.

Karras sat stunned, felt the glacial hands at the back of his neck again, more palpable now, more firm. The Regan-thing broke off its laughter and fixed him with taunting eyes. "Incidentally, your mother is here with us, Karras. Do you wish to leave a message? I will see that she gets it." Then Karras was suddenly dodging a projectile stream of vomit, leaping out of his chair. It caught a portion of his sweater and one of his hands. His face now colorless, the priest looked down at the bed. Regan cackled with glee. His hand dripped vomit onto the rug. "If that's true," the priest said numbly, "then you must know my mothers first name. What is it?" The Regan-thing hissed at him, mad eyes gleaming, head gently undulating like a cobra's. "What is it?" Regan lowed like a steer in an angry bellow that pierced the shutters and shivered through the glass of the large bay window. The eyes rolled upward into their sockets. For a time Karras watched as the bellowing continued; then he looked at his hand and walked out of the room. Chris pushed herself quickly away from the wall, glancing, with distress at the Jesuit's sweater. "What happened? Did she vomit?" "Got a towel?" he asked her. "There's a bathroom right there!" she said hurriedly, pointing at a hallway door. "Karl, take a look at her!" she instructed, and followed the priest to the bathroom.

"I'm so sorry!" she exclaimed in agitation, whipping a towel off the bar. The Jesuit moved to the



"Is she taking any nourishment at all?" asked Karras. He held his hand beneath the hot-water tap to rinse away the vomit.
She clutched and unclutched the towel. It was pink, the name Regan embroidered in blue. "No, Father. Just Sustagen when she's been sleeping. Bu she ripped out the tubing."
"Ripped it out?"
"Today."
Disturbed, Karras soaped and rinsed his hands, and after a pause said gravely, "She ought to be in a hospital."
"I just can't do that," answered Chris in a toneless voice.
"Why not?"
"I just can't!" she repeated with quavering anxiety. "I can't have anyone else involved! She's" Chrisdropped her head. Inhaled. Exhaled. "She s done something, Father. I can't take the risk of someone else finding out. Not a doctor not a nurse" She looked up. "Not anyone."
Frowning, he turned off the taps. "What if a person, let's say, was a criminal" He lowered his head, staring down at the basin. "Who's giving her the Sustagen? the Librium? her medicines?"
"We are. Her doctor showed us how."
"You need prescriptions."

"Well, you can do some of that, can't you, Father?"
Karras turned to her, hands upraised above the basin like a surgeon after washup. For a moment he met her haunted gaze, felt some terrible secret in them, some dread. He nodded at the towel in her hands. She stared blankly. "Towel, please," he said softly.
"Oh, I'm sorry!" Very quickly, she fumbled it out to him, still watching him with a tight expectancy. The Jesuit dried his hands. "Well, Father, what's it look like?" Chris finally asked him. "Do you think she's possessed?"
"Do you?"
"I don't know. I thought you were the expert."
"How much do you know about possession?"
"Just a little that I've read. Some things that the doctors told me."
"What doctors?"
"At Barringer Clinic."
He folded the towel and carefully draped it over the bar. "Are you Catholic?"
"No."
"Your daughter?"







"No, we don't under"
"What the hell's split personality, Father? You say it; I hear it. What is it? Am I really that stupid? Will you tell me what it is in a way I can finally get it through my head?" In the red-veined eyes was a plea of despairing confusion.
"Look, there's no one in the world who pretends to understand it," the priest told her gently. "All we know is that it happens, and anything beyond the phenomenon itself is only the purest speculation. But think of it this way, if you like: the human brain contains, say, seventeen billion cells."
Chris leaned forward, frowning intently.
"Now looking at these brain cells," continued Karras, "we see that they handle approximately a hundred million messages per second; that's the number of sensations bombarding your body. They not only integrate all of these messages, but they do it efficiently, they do it without ever stumbling or getting in each other's way. Now how could they do that, without some form of communication? Well, it seems as if they couldn't. So apparently each of these cells has a consciousness, maybe, of its own. Now imagine that the human body is a massive ocean liner, all right? and that all of your brain cells are the crew. Now one of these cells is up on the bridge. He's the captain. But he never knows precisely what the rest of the crew below decks is doing. All he knows is that the ship keeps running smoothly, that the job's getting done. Now the captain is you, it's your waking consciousness. And what hap-pens in dual personalitymaybe is that one of those crew cells down below decks comes up on the bridge and takes over command. In other words, mutiny. Now does that help you understand it?"
She was staring in unblinking incredulity. "Father, that's so far out of sight that I think its almost easier to believe in the devil!"
"Well"

"Look, I don't know about all these theories and stuff," she interrupted in a low, intense voice. "But I'll tell you something, Father; you show me Regan's identical twin: same face, same voice, same smell, same everything down to the way she dots her i's, and still I'd know in a second that it wasn't really her! I'd know it! I'd know it in my gut and I'm telling you I know that thing upstairs is not my daughter! I know it! I know!"

She leaned back, drained. "Now you tell me what to do," she challenged. "Go ahead: you tell me that you know for a fact there's nothing wrong with my daughter except in her head; that you know for a fact that she doesn't need an exorcism; that you know it wouldn't do her any good. Go ahead! You tell me! You tell me what to do!"
For long, troubled seconds, the priest was still. Then he answered softly, "Well, there's little in this world that I know for a fact."
He brooded, sunk back in his chair. Then he spoke again. "Does Regan have a low-pitched, voice?" he asked. "Normally?"
"No. In fact, I'd say it's very light."
'Would you consider her precocious?"
"Not at all."
"Do you know her IQ?"
"About average."
"And her reading habits?"
"Nancy Drew and comic books, mostly."
"And her style of speech, right now: how much different would you say it is from normal?"





"I'd like to see it. May I have it?"
"It's yours. It's overdue at your library. I'll get it." She was moving from the study. "That tape's in basement, I think. I'll look. Be right back in a second."
Karras nodded absently, staring at a pattern in the rug, and then after many minutes he got up, walked slowly to the entry hall and stood motionless in the darkness, stood without expression, in another dimension, staring into nothing with his hands in his pockets as he listened to the grunting of a pig from upstairs, to the yelping of a jackal, to hiccups, to hissing.
"Oh, you're there! I went looking in the study."
Karras turned to see Chris flicking on the light.
"Are you leaving?" She came forward with the book and the tape.
"I'm afraid I've got a lecture to prepare for tomorrow."
"Oh? Where?"
"At the med school." He accepted the book and the tape from her hands. "I'll try to get by here sometime tomorrow afternoon or evening. In the meantime, if anything urgent develops, you be sure that you call me, no matter what time. I'll leave word at the switchboard to let your ring through." She nodded. The Jesuit opened the door. "Now how are you fixed for medication?" he asked.
"Okay," she said. "It's all on refillable prescription."
"You won't call your doctor in again?"







Half an hour later, Damien Karras hurried back to his room in the Jesuit residence hall with a number of books and periodicals taken from the shelves of the Georgetown library. Hastily he dumped them on top of his desk and then rummaged through drawers for a package of cigarettes. Finding a half-empty pack of stale Camels, he lit one, puffed deep and held the smoke in his lungs while he thought about Regan.

Hysteria. He knew that it had to be hysteria. He exhaled the smoke, hooked his thumbs in his belt and looked down at the books. He had Oesterreich's Possession; Huxley's The Devils of Loudun; Parapraxis in the Haizman Case of Freud; McCasland's Demon Possession and Exorcism in Early Christianity in the Light of Modern Views of Mental Illness; and extracts from psychiatric journals of Freud's "A Neurosis of Demoniacal Possession in the 17th Century," and "The Demonology of Modern Psychiatry."

"Couldya help an old altar boy, Faddah?"

The Jesuit felt at his brow, and then looked at his fingers, rubbing a sticky sweat between them. Then he noticed that his door was open. He crossed the room and closed it, and then event to a shelf for his redbound copy of The Roman Ritual, a compendium of rites and prayers. Clamping the cigarette between his lips, he squinted through smoke as he turned to the "General Rules" for exorcists, looking for the signs of demonic possession. He scanned and then started to read more slowly:

...The exorcist should not believe too rapidly that a person is possessed by an evil spirit; but he ought to ascertain the signs by which a person possessed can be distinguished from one who is suffering from some illness, especially one of a psychological nature. Signs of possession may be the following: ability to speak with some facility in a strange language or, to understand it when spoken by another; the faculty of divulging future and hidden events; display of powers which are beyond the subject's age and natural condition; and various other conditions which, when taken together as a whole, build up the evidence.

For a time Karras pondered, then he leaned against the bookshelf and read the remainder of the instructions. When he had finished, he found himself glancing back up at instruction number 8:

Some reveal a crime which has been committed and the perpetrators thereof---



"I've looked all through the hall for some lemon drops. Nobody's got any. Boy, I really crave one," Dyer brooded, still prowling. "I once spent a year hearing children's confessions, and I wound up a lemon-drop junkie. I got hooked. The little bastards keep breathing it on you along with all that pot. Between the two, it's addictive, I think." He lifted the lid of a pipe-tobacco humidor where Karras had stored some pistachio nuts. "What are these--- dead Mexican jumping beans?"

Karras turned to his bookshelves, looking for a title. "Listen, Joe, I've got a"
"Isn't that Chris really nice?" interrupted Dyer, flopping on the bed. He stretched full length with his hands clasped comfortably behind his head. "Nice lady. Have you met her?"
"We've talked," answered Karras, plucking out a green-bound volume called Satan, a collection of articles and Catholic position papers by various French theologians. He carried it back with him toward the desk, "Look I've really got to"
"Plain. Down-to-earth. Unaffected," continued Dyer. "She can help us with my plan for when we both quit the priesthood."
"Who's quitting the priesthood?"
"Faggots. In droves. Basic black has gone out. Now, I"
"Joe, I've got a lecture to prepare for tomorrow," said Karras as he set down the books on his desk.
"Yeah, okay. Now my plan is we go to Chris MacNeil got the picture? with this notion that I've got for a screenplay based on the life of Saint Ignatius Loyola. The title is Brave Jesuits Marching, and"
"Would you get your ass out of here, Joe?" prodded Karras, tamping out his cigarette butt in an ashtray.
"Is this boring?"
"I've got work to do."



Karras showered and then dressed in a T-shirt and trousers. Sitting down to his desk, he discovered a carton of Camel nonfilters, and beside it a key that was labeled LANGUAGE LAB and another tagged REFECTORY REFRIGERATOR. Appended to the latter was a note: Better you than the rats. Karras smiled at the signature: The Lemon Drop Kid. He put the note aside, then unfastened is wristwatch and plated it in front of him on the desk. The time was 10:58 P.M. He began to read. Freud. McCasland. Satan. Oesterreich's exhaustive study. And at a little after 4 A.M., he had finished. Was rubbing at his face. At his eyes. They were smarting. He glanced at the ashtray. Ashes and the twisted butts of cigarettes. Smoke hanging thick in the air. He stood up and walked wearily to a window. Slid it open. He gulped at the coolness of the moist morning air and stood there thinking. Regan had the physical syndrome of possession. That much he knew. About that he had no doubt. For in case after case, irrespective of geography or period of history, the symptoms of possession were substantially constant. Some Regan had not evidenced as yet: stigmata; the desire for repugnant foods; the insensitivity to pain; the frequent loud and irrepressible hiccuping. But the others she had manifested clearly: the involuntary motor excitement; foul breath; furred tongue; the wasting away of the frame; the distended stomach; the irritations of the skin and mucous-membrane. And most significantly present were the basic symptoms of the hard core of cases which Oesterreich had characterized as "genuine" possession: the striking change in the voice and in the features, plus the manifestation of a new personality.

Karras looked up and stared darkly down the street. Through the branches of trees he could see the house and the large bay window of Regan's bedroom. When possession was voluntary, as with mediums, the new personality was often benign. Like Tia, brooded Karras. Spirit of a woman who'd possessed a man. A sculptor. Briefly. An hour at a time. Until a friend of the sculptor fell desperately in love. With Tia. Pleaded with the sculptor to permit her to permanently remain in possession of his body. But in Regan, there's no Tia, Karras reflected grimly. The invading personality was vicious. Malevolent. Typical of cases of demonic possession where the new personality sought the destruction of the body of its host. And frequently achieved it.

Moodily the Jesuit walked back to his desk, where he picked up a package of cigarettes; lit one. So okay. She's got the syndrome of demonic possession. Now how do you cure it?

He fanned out the match. That depends on what caused it. He sat on the edge of his desk. Considered. The nuns at the convent of Lille. Possessed. In early-seventeenth-century France. They'd confessed to their exorcists that while helpless in the state of possession, they had regularly attended Satanic orgies; had regularly varied their erotic fare: Mondays and Tuesdays, heterosexual copulation; Thursdays, sodomy, fellatio and cunnilingus, with homosexual partners; Saturday, bestiality with domestic animals and dragons. And dragons!... The Jesuit shook his head. As with Lille, he thought the causes of many possessions were a mixture of fraud and mythomania. Still others, however, seemed caused by mental illness: paranoia; schizophrenia;; neurasthenia; psychasthenia; and this was the reason, he knew, that the

Church had for years recommended that the exorcist work with a psychiatrist or a neurologist present. Yet not all possessions had causes so clear. Many had led Oesterreich to characterize possession as a separate disorder all its own; to dismiss the explanatory "split personality" label of psychiatry as no more than an equally occult substitution for the concepts of "demon" and "spirit of the dead."

Karras rubbed a finger in the crease beside his nose. The indications from Barringer, Chris had told him, were that Reagan's disorder might be caused by suggestion; by something that was somehow related to hysteria. And Karras thought it likely. He believed the majority of the cases he had studied had been caused by precisely these two factors. Sure. For one thing, it mostly hits women. For another, all those outbreaks of possession epidemics. And then those exorcists... Karras frowned. They often themselves became the victims of possession. He thought of Loudun. France. The Ursuline Convent of nuns. Of four of the exorcists sent there to deal with an epidemic of possession, three---- Fathers Lucas, Lactance and Tranquille--- not only became possessed, but died soon after, apparently of shock. And the fourth, Père Surin, who was thirty-three years old at the time of his possession, became insane for the subsequent twenty-five years of his life.

He nodded to himself. If Regan's disorder was hysterical; if the onset of possession was the product of suggestion, then the source of the suggestion could only be the chapter in the book on witchcraft. The chapter on possession. Did she read it?

He pored over its pages. Were there striking similarities between any of its details and Regan's be-havior? That might prove it. It might.

He found some correlations:

...The case of an eight-year-old girl who was described in the chapter as "bellowing like a bull in thunderous, deep bass voice." (Regan's lowing like a steer.)

...The case of Helen Smith, who'd been treated by the great psychologist Flournoy; his description of her changing her voice and her features with "lightning" rapdity" into those of a variety of personalities. (She did that with me. The personality who spoke with a British accent. Quick change. Instanttaneous.)

...A case in South Africa, reported by the noted ethnologist Junod; his description of a woman who'd vanished from her dwelling one night being found on the following morning "tied to the top" of a very tall tree by "fine lianas," and then afterward "gliding down the tree, head down, while hissing and rapidly flicking her tongue in and out like a snake. She then hung suspended, for a time, and proceeded to speak in a language that no one had ever heard." (Regan gliding like a snake when she was following Sharon.

The gibberish. An attempt at an "unknown language.")

...The case of Joseph and Thiebaut Burner, aged eight and ten; description of them "lying on their backs and suddenly whirling like tops with the utmost rapidity." (Sounds pretty close to her whirling like a dervish.)

There were other similarities; still other reasons for suspecting suggestion: mention of abnormal strength; of obscenity of speech; and accounts of possession from the gospels, which perhaps were the basis, thought Karras, of the curiously religious content of Regan's ravings at Barringer Clinic. Moreover, in the chapter there was mention of the onset of possession in stages: "...The first, infestation, consists of an -attack through the victim's surroundings; noises--- odors--- the displacement of objects; and the second, obsession, consists in a personal attack on the subject designed to instill terror through the kind of injury that one man might inflict on another through blows and kicks." The rappings. The flingings. The attacks by Captain Howdy.

Maybe... maybe she read it. But Karras wasn't convinced. Not at all... not at all. And Chris. She had seemed so uncertain about it.

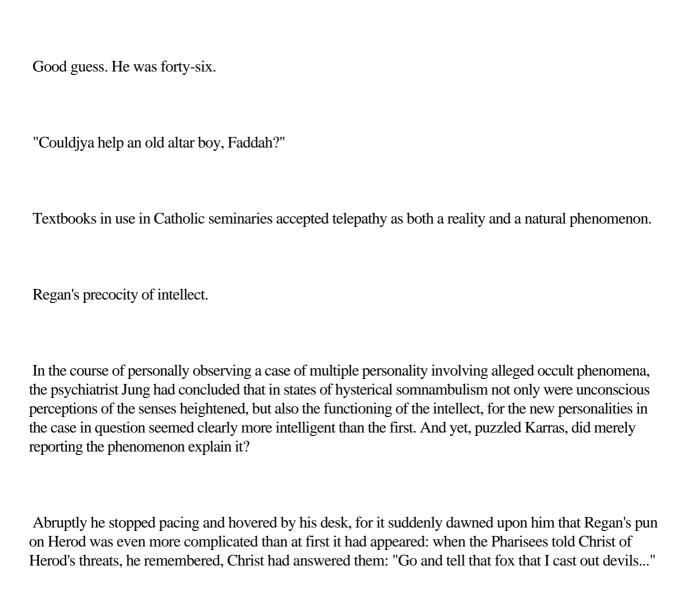
He walked to the window again. What's the answer, then? Genuine possession? A demon? He looked down and shook his head. No way. No way. Paranormal happenings? Sure. Why not? Too many competent observers had reported them. Doctors. Psychiatrists. Men like Junod. But the problem is how do you interpret the phenomena? He thought back to Oesterreich. Reference to a shaman of the Altai. Siberia. Voluntarily possessed and examined in a clinic while performing an apparently paranormal action: levitation. Just prior, his pulse rate had spurted to one hundred, then, afterward, leaped to an amazing two hundred. Marked changes in temperature as well. Its respiration. So his paranormal action was tied to physiology. It was caused by some bodily energy or force. But as proof of possession the Church wanted clear and exterior phenomena that suggested....

He'd forgotten the wording. Looked it up. Traced a finger down the page of a book on his desk. Found it: "...verifiable exterior phenomena which suggest the idea that they are due to the extraordinary intervention of an intelligent cause other than man." Was that the case with the shaman? Karras asked himself. No. And is that the case with Regan?

He turned to a passage he had underlined in percil: "The exorcist will simply be careful that none of the patient's manifestations are left unaccounted for..."

He nodded. Okay, then. Let's see. Pacing, he ran through the manifestations of Regan's disorder along

with their possible explanations. He ticked them off mentally, one by one:
The startling change in Regan's features.
Partly her illness. Partly undernourishment. Mostly, he concluded, it was due to physiognomy being an expression of psychic constitution. Whatever the hell that means! he added wryly.
The startling change in Regan's voice.
He had yet to hear the original voice. And even if that had been light, as reported by her mother, constant shrieking would thicken the vocal cords, with a consequent deepening of the voice. The only problem here, he reflected, was the massive volume of that voice, for even with a thickening of the cords this would seem to be physiologically impossible. And yet, he considered, in states of anxiety or pathology, displays of paranormal strength in excess of muscular potential were known to be a commonplace. Might not vocal cords and voice box be subject to the same mysterious effect?
Regan's suddenly extended vocabulary and knowledge.
Cryptomnesia: buried recollections of words and data she had once been exposed to, even in infancy, perhaps. In somnambulists and frequently in people at the point of death the buried data often came to the surface with almost photographic fidelity.
Regan's recognition of him as a priest.
Good guess. If she had read the chapter on possession, she might have expected a visit by a priest. And according to Jung, the unconscious awareness and sensitivity of hysterical patients could at moments be fifty times greater than normal, which accounted for seemingly authentic "thought reading" via table-tapping by mediums, for what the medium's unconscious was actually "reading" were the tremors and vibrations created in the table by the hands of the person whose thoughts were supposedly being read. The tremors formed a pattern of letters or numbers. Thus, Regan might conceivably have "read" his identity merely from his manner; from the look of his hands; from the scent of sacramental wine.
Regan's knowledge of the death of his mother.



He glanced at the tape of Regan's voice for a moment, then sat wearily at the desk. He lit another cigarette... exhaled... thought again of the Burner boys; of the case of the eight-year-old girl who had manifested symptoms of full-blown possession. What book had this girl read that had enabled her unconscious mind to simulate the symptoms to such perfection? And how did the unconscious of victims in China communicate the symptoms to the various un-conscious minds of people possessed in Siberia, in Germany, in Africa, so that the symptoms were always the same?

"Incidentally, your mother is here with us, Karras..."

He stared unseeing as smoke from his cigarette rose like whispered curls of memory. The priest leaned back, looking down at the bottom left-hand drawer of the desk. For a time, he kept staring. Then slowly he leaned down, pulled open the drawer and extracted a faded language exercise book. Adult education. His mother's. He set it on the desk and thumbed the pages with a tender care. Letters of the alphabet, over and over. Then simple exercises:

LESSON VI

MY COMPLETE ADDRESS

Between the pages, an attempt at a letter.
***(INSERT Dear_Dimmy_Writing.jpg HERE)
Then another beginning. Incomplete. He looked away. Saw her eyes at the window waiting
" 'Domine, non sum dignus' "
The eyes became Regan's eyes shrieking eyes waiting
" 'Speak but the word' "
He glanced at the tape of Regan's voice.
He left the room. Took the tape to the language lab. Found a tape recorder. Sat down. He threaded the tape to an empty reel. Clamped on earphones. Turned on the switch. Then leaned forward and listened. Exhausted. Intense.

For a time, only tape hiss. Squeaking of the mechanism. Suddenly, a thumping sound of activation. Noises. "Hello..." Then a whining feedback. Chris MacNeil, tone hushed, in the background: "Not so close to the microphone, honey. Hold it back." "Like this?" "No, more." "Like this?" "Yeah, okay. Go ahead now, just talk." Giggling. The microphone bumping a table. Then the sweet, clear voice of Regan MacNeil:

"Hello, Daddy? This is me. Ummm..." Giggling; then a whispered aside: "I can't tell what to say!" "Oh, just tell him how you are, honey. Tell about all of the things you've been doing." More giggling, then: "Umm, Daddy... Well, ya see... I mean, I hope you can hear me okay, and, umm--- well, now, let's see. Umm, well, first we're--- No, wait, now.... See, first we're in Washington, Daddy, ya know? I mean, that's where the President lives; and this house--- ya know. Daddy?--- it's--- No, wait, now; I better start over. See, Daddy, there's..."

Karras heard the rest only dimly, from afar, through the roaring of blood in his ears, like the ocean, as up through his chest and his fate swelled an overwhelming intuition: The thing that I saw in that room wasn't Regan!

He returned to the Jesuit residence hall. Found a cubicle. Said Mass before the rush. As he lifted the Host in consecration, it trembled in his fingers with a hope he dared not hope, that he fought with every particled fiber of his will. "For this is My Body...'" he whispered tremulously.

No, bread! This is nothing but bread!

He dared not love again and lose. That loss was too great, that pain too keen. He bowed his head and swallowed the Host like lost illusion. For a moment it stuck in the dryness of his throat.

After Mass, he skipped breakfast. Made notes for his lecture. Met his class at the Georgetown University Medical School. Threaded hoarsely through the ill-prepared talk: "...and in considering the symptoms of manic mood disorders, you will..." "Daddy, this is me... this is me..."

But who was "me"?

Karras dismissed the class early and returned to his room, where immediately he hunched over his desk, palms of his hands pressed flat, and intently reexamined the Church's position on the paranormal signs of demonic possession. Was I being too hard-nosed? he wondered. He scrutinized the high points in Satan: "telepathy... natural phenomenon... movement of objects from a distance now suspect... from the body there may emanate some fluid... our forefathers... science... nowadays we must be more cautious. The paranormal evidence notwithstanding, however..." He slowed the pace of his reading. "...all conversations held with the patient must be carefully analyzed, for if they present the same system of association of ideas and of logicogrammatical habits that he exhibits in his normal state, the possession must then be held suspect."

Karras breathed deeply, exhausted. Then exhaled. Dropped his head. No way. Doesn't cut it. He glanced to the plate on the facing page. A demon. His gaze flicked down idly to the caption: "Pazuzu." Karras shut his eyes. Something wrong. Tranquille... He envisioned the exorcist's death: the final agonies... the bellowing... the hissing... the vomiting... the hurlings to the ground from his bed by his "demons," who were furious because soon he would be dead and beyond their torment. And Lucas! Lucas. Kneeling by the bedside. Praying. But the moment Tranquille was dead, Lucas instantly assumed the identity of his demons, began viciously lucking at the still-warm corpse, at the shattered, clawed body reeking of excrement and vomit, while six strong men were attempting to restrain him, would not stop until the corpse had been carried from the room. Karras saw it. Saw it clearly.

Could it be? Could it possibly, conceivably be? Could the only hope for Regan be the ritual of exorcism? Must be open up that locker of aches?

He could not shake it. Could not leave it untested. He must know. How to know? He opened his eyes. "...conversations with the patient must be carefully..." Yes. Yes, why not? If discovery that speech patterns of Regan and the "demon" were the same ruled out possession even with paranormal occurrences, then certainly... Sure... strong difference in the patterns should mean that there probably is possession!

He paced. What else? What else? Something quick. She--- Wait a minute. He paused, staring down, hands clasped behind his back. That chapter... that chap-ter in the book on witchcraft. Had it mentioned...? Yes, it had: that demons invariably reacted with fury when confronted with the consecrated Host... with relics... with--- Holy water! Right! That's it! I'll go up there and sprinkle her with tap water! But tell her it's holy water! Sure! If she reacts the way demons are supposed to react, then I'll know she's not possessed... that the symptoms are suggestive... that she got them from the book! But if she doesn't react it would mean...

Genuine possession?
Maybe
Feverish, he rummaged for a holy-water vial.

Willie admitted him to the house. In the entry, he glanced toward Regan's bedroom. Shouts. Obscenities. And yet not in the deep, coarse voice of the demon. Raspy. Lighter. A broad British Yes! The manifestation that had fleetingly appeared when he'd last sees Regan.
Karras glanced down at the waiting Willie. She was staring puzzled at the Roman collar. At the priestly robes. "Where's Mrs. MacNeil, please?" Karras asked her.
Willie motioned upstairs.
'Thank you."
He moved to the staircase. Climbed. Saw Chris in the hall. She was sitting in a chair near Regan's bedroom, head lowered, her arms folded on her chest. As the Jesuit approached her, Chris heard the swishing of his robes. She glanced up and quickly stood. "Hello, Father."
There were bluish sacs beneath her eyes. Karras frowned. "Did you sleep?"
"Oh, a little."
He was shaking his head in admonishment.
"Well, I couldn't," she sighed at him, motioning her head at Regan's door. "She's been doing that all night."
"Any vomiting?"
"No." She took hold of his sleeve as if to lead him away. "C'mon, let's go downstairs where we can





"Not at all."
"You're a liar!"
"Does that bother you?"
"Mildly."
"But the devil likes liars."
"Only good ones, dear Karras, only good ones," it chuckled. "Moreover, who said I'm the devil?"
"Didn't you?"
"Oh, I might have. I might. I'm not well. You believed me?"
"Of course."
"My apologies."
"Are you saying that you aren't the devil?"
"Just a poor struggling demon. A devil. A subtle distinction, but one not entirely lost upon Our Father who is in Hell. Incidentally, you won't retention my slip of the tongue to him, Kartas, now will you? Eh? When you see him?"





Gone. Karl was gone. And now abruptly the thing within Regan was cordial, watching Karras as the priest quickly set up the tape recorder; looked for an outlet; plugged it in; threaded tape.
"Oh, yes, hullo hullo. What's up?" it said happily. "Are we going to record something, Padre? How fun! Oh, I do love to playact, you know! Oh, immensely!"
"I'm Damien Karras," said the priest as he worked. "And who are you?"
"Are you asking for my credits now, ducks? Damned cheeky of you, wouldn't you say?" It giggled. "I was Puck in the junior class play." It glanced around. "Where's a drink, incidentally? I'm parched."
The priest placed the microphone gently on the nightstand.
"If you'll tell me your name, I'll try to find one."
"Yes, of course," it responded with a cackle of amusement. "And then drink it yourself, I suppose."
As he pushed the RECORD button, Karras answered, "Tell me your name."
"Fucking plunderer!" it rasped.
And then promptly disappeared and was replaced by the demon. "And what are we doing now, Karras? Recording our little discussion?"
Karras straightened. Stared. Then he pulled up a chair beside the bed and sat dawn. "Do you mind?" he responded.
"Not at all," croaked the demon. "I have always rather liked infernal engines."

Abruptly a strong, new stench assailed Karras. It was an odor like
"Sauerkraut, Karras. Have you noticed?"
It does smell like sauerkraut, the Jesuit marveled. It seemed to be emanating from the bed. From Regan's body. Then it was gone, replaced by the putrid stench of before. Karras frowned. Did I imagine it? Auto-suggestion? He thought of the holy water. Now? No, save it. Get more of the speech pattern. "To whom was I speaking before?" he asked.
"Merely one of the family, Karras."
"A demon?"
"You give too much credit."
"How so?"
"The word 'demon' means 'wise one.' He is stupid."
The Jesuit grew taut. "In what language does 'demon' mean 'wise one' ?"
"In Greek."
"You speak Greek?"
"Very fluently."

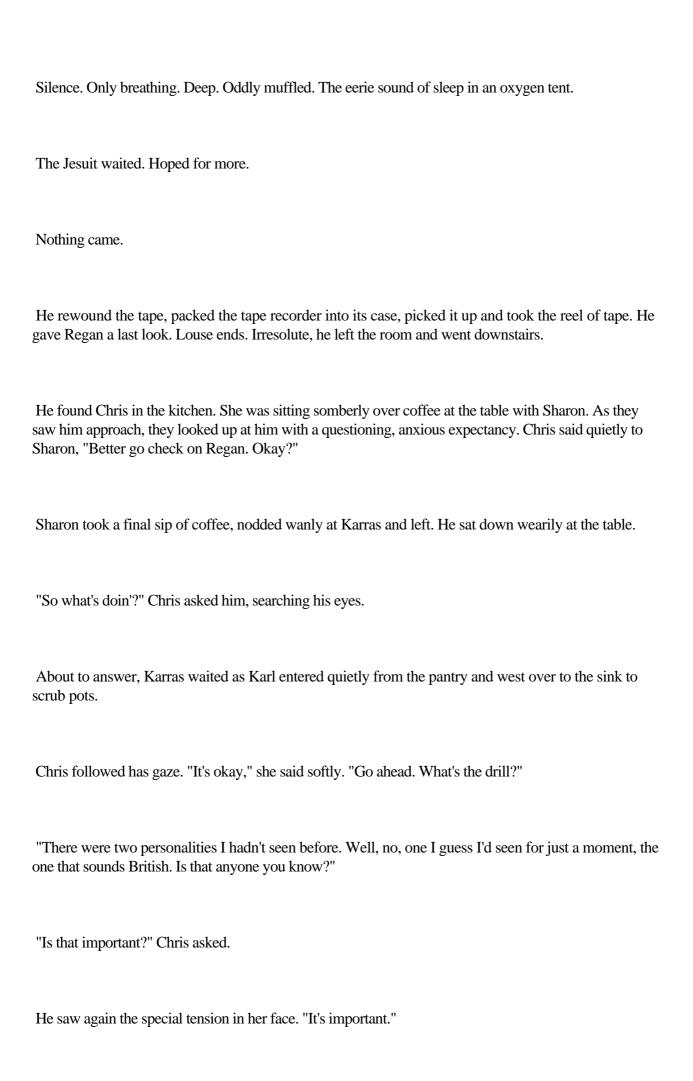
One of the signs! Karras thought with excitement. Speaking in an unknown tongue! It was more than he'd hoped for. "Pos egnokas hoti presbyteros eimi?" he quickly inquired in classical Greek.
"I am not in the mood, Karras."
"Oh. Then you cannot"
"I am not in the mood!"
Disappointment. Karras brooded., "You made the dresser drawer come sliding out?" He inquired.
"Most assuredly."
"Very impressive." Karras nodded. "You're certainly a very, very power demon."
"I am."
"I was wondering if you'd do it again."
"Yes, in time."
"Do it now, please I would really like to see it."
"In time."

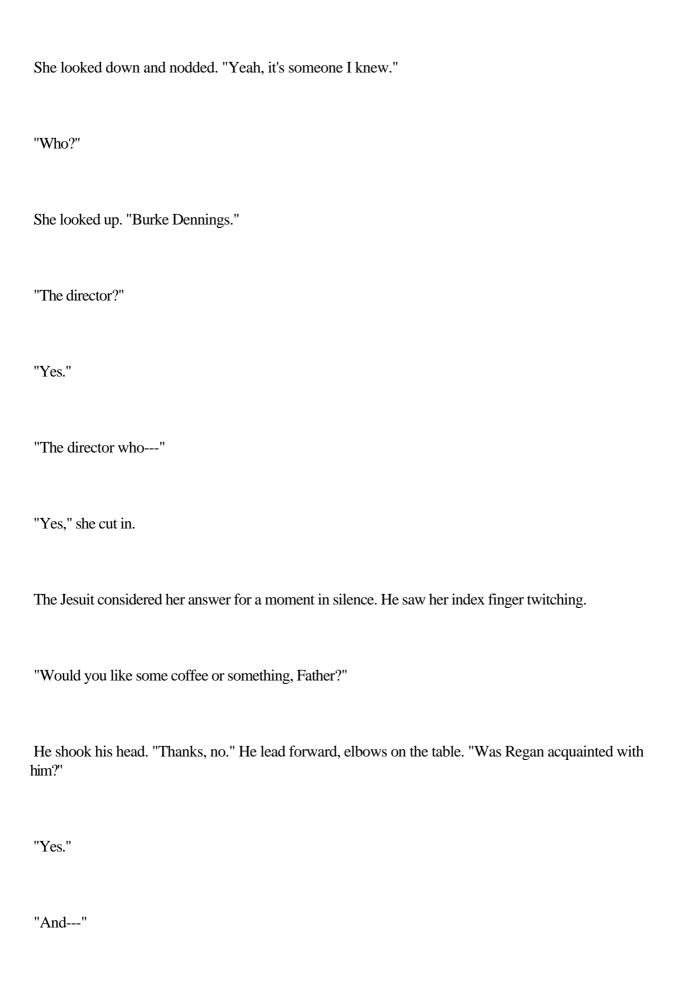
"Why not now?"
"We must give you some reason for doubt," it croaked. "Some. Just enough to assure the final outcome." It put back its head in a chuckle of malice. "How novel to attack through the truth! Ah, what joy!"
Icy hands lightly touching at his neck. Karras stared. Why the fear again? Fear? Was it fear?
"No, not fear," said the demon. It was grinning. "That was me."
Hands gone now. Karras frowned. Felt new wonder. Chipped it down. Telepathic. Or is she? Find out. Find out now. "Can you tell me what I'm thinking right now?"
"Your thoughts are too dull to entertain."
"Then you can't read my mind."
"You may have it as you wish as you wish."
Try the holy water? Now? He heard the squeaking of the tape-recorder mechanism. No. Just keep digging. Get more of a sampling of the speech. "You're a fascinating person," said Karras.
Regan sneered.
"Oh, no, really," said Karres. "I'd like to know more about your background. You've never told me who you are, for example."
"A devil," rumbled the demon.

"Yes, I know, but which devil? What's your name?"
"Ah, now what is in a name, Karras? Never mind my name. Call me Howdy, if you find it more comfortable."
"Oh, yes. Captain Howdy." Karras nodded. "Regan's friend."
"Her very close friend."
"Oh, really?"
"Indeed."
"But then why do you torment her?"
"Because I am her friend. The piglet likes it!"
"She likes it?"
"She adores it!"
"But why?"
"Ask her!"
"Would you allow her to answer?"



"Don't you know?" asked Karras, his thumb half covering the mouth of the vial as he started to sprinkle its contents on Regan. "It's holy water, devil."
Immediately the demon was cringing, writhing, bellowing in terror and in pain: "It burns! It burns! Ahh, stop it! Cease, priest bastard! Cease!"
Expressionless, Karras stopped sprinkling. Hysteria. Suggestion. She did read the book. He glanced at the tape recorder. Why bother?
He noticed the silence. Looked at Regan. Knit his bows. What's this? What's going on? The demonic personality had vanished and in its place were other features, which were similar. Yet different. And the eyes had rolled upward into their sockets, exposing the whites. Now murmuring. Slowly. A feverish gibberish. Karras came around to the side of the bed. Leaned over to listen. What is it? Nothing. And yet It's got cadence. Like a language. Could it be? He felt the fluttering of wings in his stomach; gripped them hard; held them still. Come on, don't be an idiot! And yet
He glanced to the volume monitor on the tape recorder. Not flashing. He turned up the amplification knob and then listened, intent, ear low to Regan's lips. The gibberish ceased and was replaced by breathing, raspy and deep.
Karras straightened. "Who are you?" he asked.
"Nowonmai," the entity answered. Groaning whisper. In pain. Whites of eyes. Lids fluttering. "Nowonmai." The cracked, breathy voice, like the soul of its owner, seemed cloistered in a dark, curtained space beyond time.
"Is that your name?" Karras frowned.
The lips moved. Fevered syllables. Slow. Unintelligible. Then shortly it ceased.
"Are you able to understand me?"

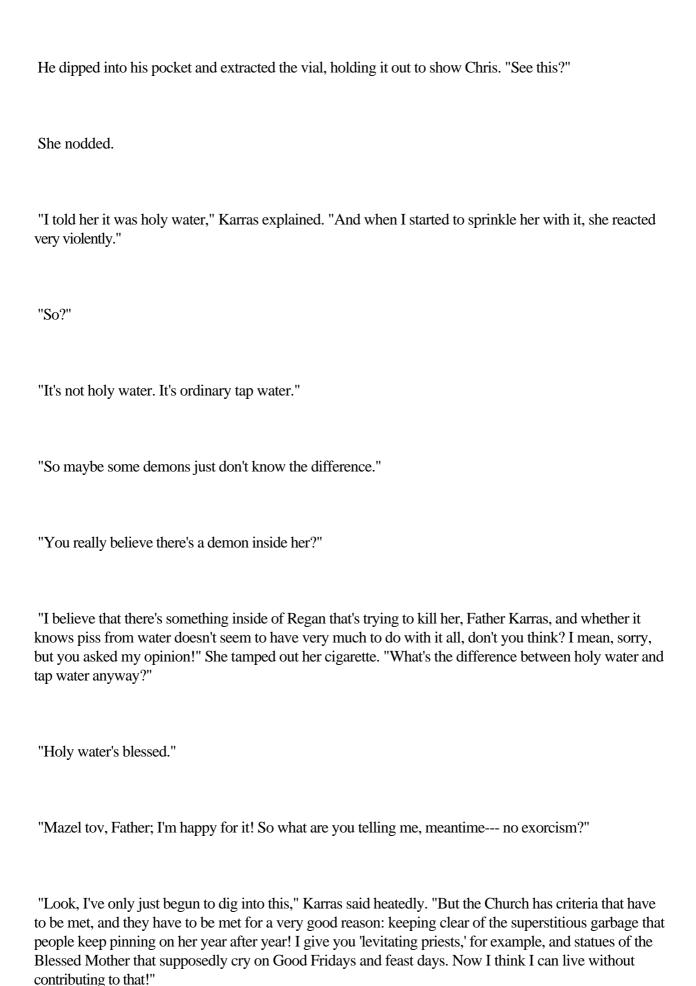


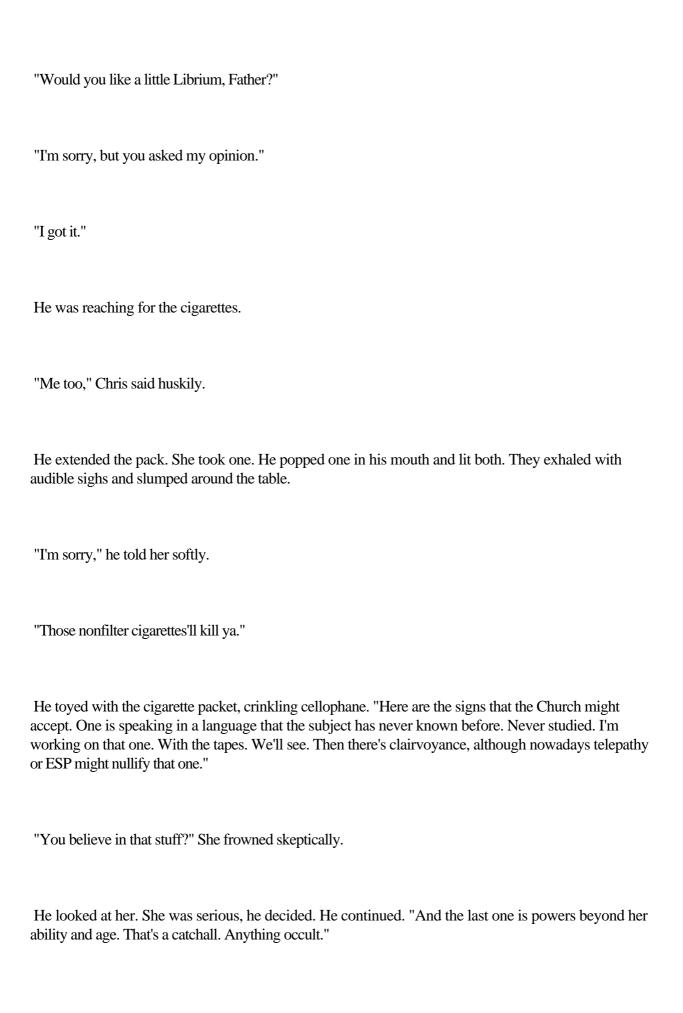




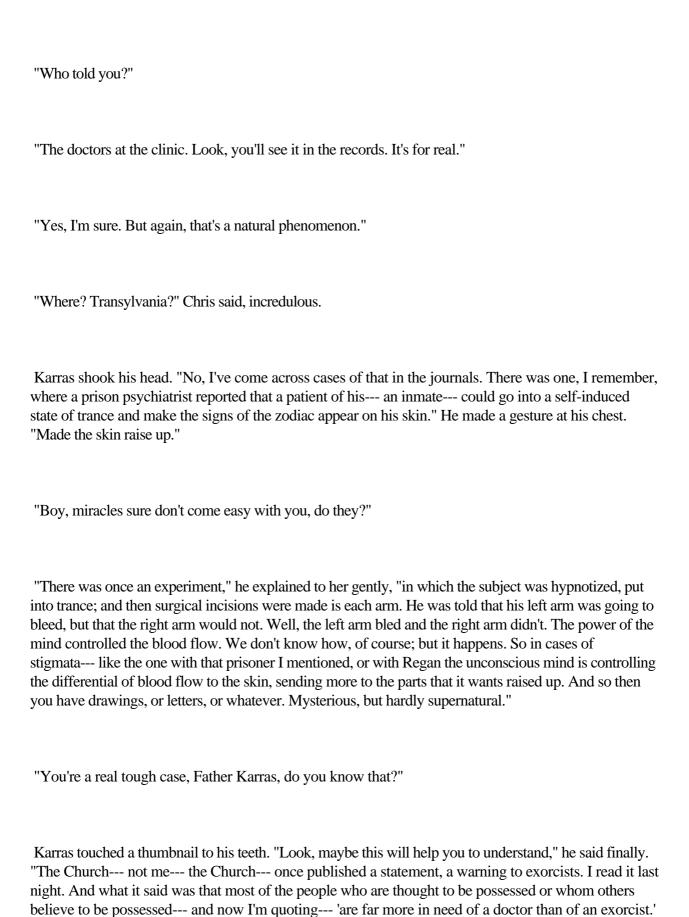




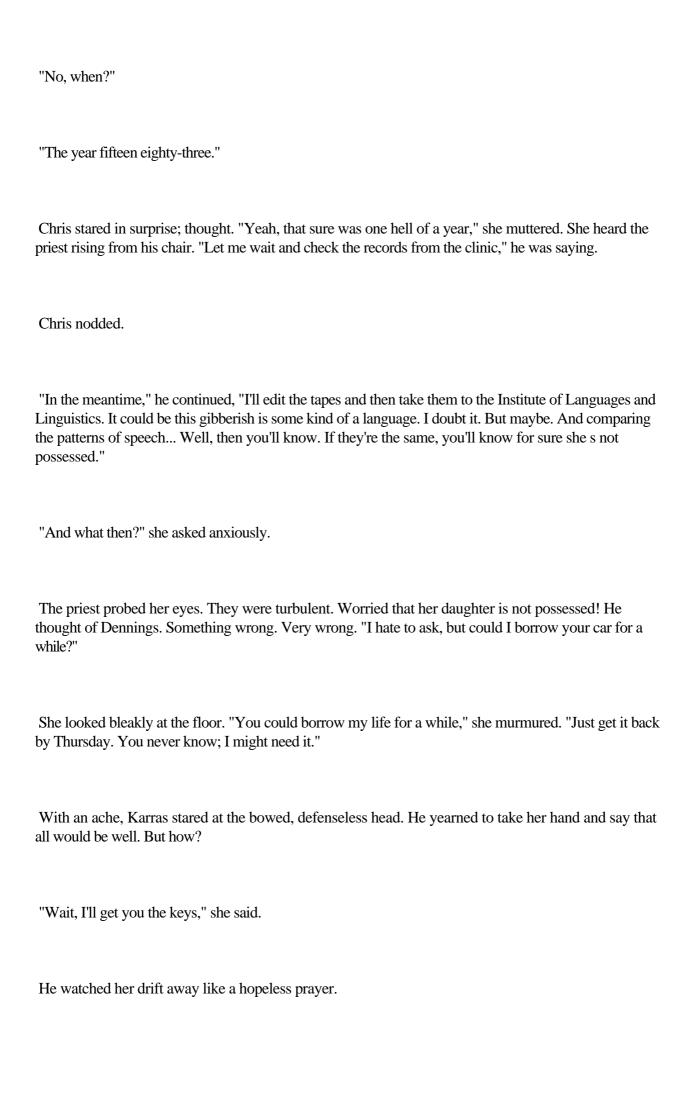




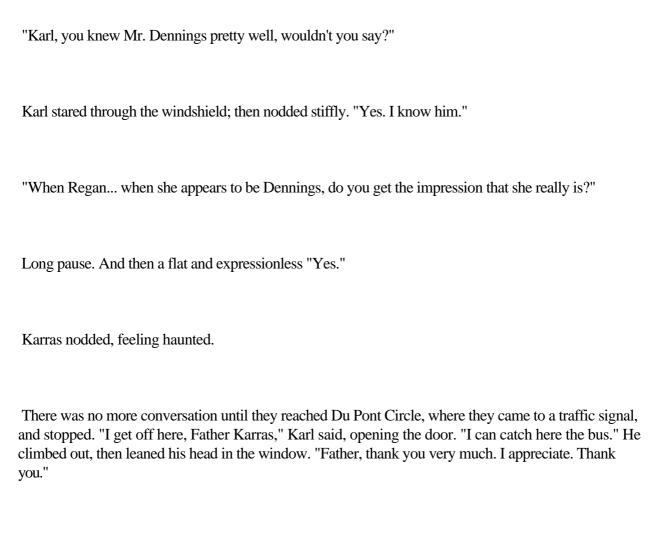




"He looked up into Chris's eyes. "Can you guess when that warning was issued?"



When she'd given him the keys, Karras walked back to his room at the residence hall. He left the tape recorder there and collected the tape of Regan's voice. Then he went back across the street to Chris's parked car.
Climbing in, he heard Karl calling out from the doorway of the house: "Father Karras!" Karras looked. Karl was rushing down the stoop, quickly throwing on a jacket. He was waving. "Father Karras! One moment!"
Karras leaned over and cranked down the window on the passenger side. Karl leaned his head in. "You are going which way, Father Karras?"
"Du Pont Circle."
"Ah, yes, good! You could drop me, please, Father? You would mind?"
"Glad to do it. Jump in."
Karl nodded. "I appreciate it, Father!"
Karras started up the engine. "Do you good to get out"
"Yes, I go to see a film. A good film."
Karras put the car in gear and pulled away.
For a time they drove in silence. Karras was preoccopied, searching for answers. Possession. Impossible. The holy water. Still

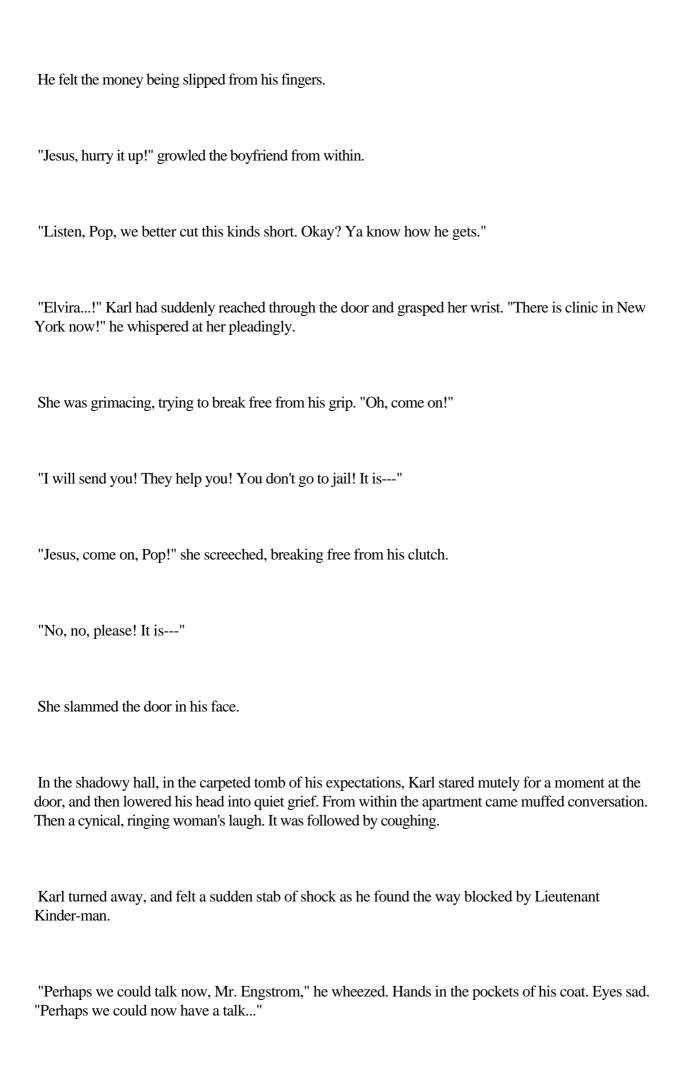


He stood back on the safety island and waited for the light to change. He smiled and waved as the priest drove. away. He watched the car until at last it disappeared around the bend at the mouth of Massachusetts Avenue. Then he ran for a bus. Boarded. Took a transfer. Changed buses. Rode in silence until finally he debarked at a northeast tenement section of the city, where he walked to a crumbling apartment building and entered.

Karl paused at the bottom of the gloomy staircase, smelling acrid aromas from efficiency kitchens. From somewhere the sound of a baby crying. He lowered his head. A roach scuttled quickly from a baseboard and across a stair in jagging darts. He clutched at the banister and seemed on the verge of turning back, but then shook his head and began to climb. Each groaning footfall creaked like a rebuke.

On the second floor, he walked to a door in a murky wing, and for a moment he stood there, a hand on the door frame. He glanced at the wall: peeling paint; Nicky and Ellen in penciled scrawl and below it, a date and a heart whose core was cracking plaster. Karl pushed the buzzer and waited, head down. From within the apartment, a squeaking of bedsprings. Irritable muttering. Then someone approaching: a sound that was irregular: the dragging clump of an orthopedic shoe. Abruptly the door jerked partly open, the chain of a safety latch rattling to its limit as a woman in a slip scowled out through the aperture, a cigarette dangling from the corner of her mouth.

"Oh, it's you," she said huskily. She took off the chain.
Karl met the eyes that were shifting hardness, that were haggard wells of pain and blame; glimpsed briefly the dissolute bending of the lips and the ravaged face of a youth and a beauty buried alive in a thousand motel rooms, in a thousand awakenings from restless sleep with a stifled cry at remembered grace.
"C'mon, tell 'im to fuck off!" A coarse male voice from within the apartment. Slurred. The boyfriend.
The girl turned her head and snapped quickly, "Oh, shut up, jerk, it's Pop!"
The girl turned to Karl. "He's drunk, Pop. Ya better not come in."
Karl nodded.
The girl's hollow eyes shifted down to his hand as it reached to a back trouser pocket for a wallet. "How's Mama?" she asked him, dragging on her cigarette, eyes on the hands that were dipping in the wallet, hands counting out tens.
"She is fine." He nodded .tersely. "Your mother is fine."
As he handed her the money, she began to cough rackingly. She threw up a hand to her mouth. "Fuckin' cigarettes!" she choked out.
Karl stared at the puncture scabs on her arm.
"Thanks, Pop."



CHAPTER TWO

Karras threaded tape to an empty reel in the office of the rotund, silver-hair director of the Institute of Languages and Linguistics. Having carefully edited sections of his tapes onto separate reels, he was about to play the first. He started the tape recorder and stepped back from the table. They lis-tened to the fever voice croaking its gibberish. Then he turned to the director. "What is that, Frank? Is it a language?"

The director was sitting on the edge of his desk. By the time the tape ended, he was frowning in puzzlement. "Pretty weird. Where'd you get that?"

Karras stopped the tape. "Oh, it's something that I've had for a number of years from when I worked on a case of dual personality. I'm doing a paper on it."

"I see."

"Well, what about it?"

The director pulled off his glasses and chewed at the tortoise frame. "No, it isn't any language that I've ever heard. However..." He frowned. And then looked up at Karras. "Want to play it again?"

Karras quickly rewound the tape and played it over. "Now what do you think?" he asked.

"Well, it does have the cadence of speech."

Karras felt a quickening of hope. Fought it down. "Yes, that's what I thought," he agreed.



"Oh, yes. Well, pretty much. You see, that sort of test would discount any change in the basis vocabulary. It's not words but expression of the words: the style. We call it 'index of diversity.' Very baffling to the layman, which, of course, is what we want." The director smiled wryly. Then he nodded at the tapes in Karras' hands. "You've got two different people on those, is that it?"

"No. The voice and the words came out of the mouth of just one person, Frank. As I said, it was a case of dual personality. The words and the voices seem totally different to me but both are from the mouth of just one person. Look, I need a big favor from you..."

"You'd like me to test them out? I'd be glad to. I'll give it to one of the instructors."

"No, Frank, that's the really big part of the favor: I'd like you to do it yourself and as fast as you can do it. It's terribly important."

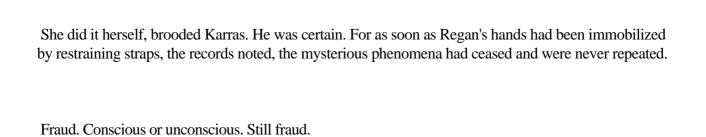
The director read the urgency in his eyes. He nodded. "Okay. Okay. I'll get on it."

The director made copies of both the tapes, and Karras returned to the Jesuit residence hall with the originals. He found a message slip in his room. The records from the clinic had arrived.

He hurried to Reception and signed for the package. Back in his room, he began to read immediately; and was soon convinced that his trip to the Institute had been wasted.

"...indications of guilt obsession with ensuing hysterical-somnambulistic..."

Room for doubt. Always room. Interpretation. But Regan's stigmata... Karras buried his weary face in his hands. The skin stigmata that Chris had described had indeed been reported in Regan's fife. But it also had been noted that Regan had hyperreactive skin and could herself have produced the mysterious letters merely by tracing them on her flesh with a finger a short time prior to their appearance. Dermatographia.



He lifted his head and eyed the phone. Frank. Call him off? He picked up the receiver. There was no answer and he left word for him to call. Then, exhausted, he stood up and walked slowly to the bathroom. He splashed cold water an his face. "The exorcist will simply be careful that none of the patent's manifestations are left...." He looked up at himself in the mirror. Had he missed something? What? The sauerkraut odor. He turned and slipped a towel off the rack and wiped his face. Autosuggestion, he remembered. And the mentally ill, in certain instances, seemed able unconsciously to direct their bodies to emit a variety of odors.

Karras wiped his hands. The poundings... the opening and closing of the drawer. Psychokinesis? Really? "You believe in that stuff?" He paused as he set back the towel; grew aware that he wasn't thinking clearly. Too tired. Yet he dared not give Regan up to guess; to opinion; to the savage betrayals of the mind.

He left the hall and went to the campus library. He searched through the Guide to Periodical Literature: Po... Pol... Pol... He found what he was looking for and sat down with a scientific journal to read an article on poltergeist-phehomena investigations by the German psychiatrist Dr. Hans Bender.

No doubt about it, he concluded when he finished: psychokinetic phenomena existed; had been thoroughly documented; filmed; observed in psychiatric clinics. And in none of the cases reported in the article was there any connection to demonic possession. Rather, the hypothesis was mind-directed energy unconsciously produced and usually--- and significantly, Karras saw--- by adolescents in stages of "extremely high inner tension, frustration and rage."

Karras rubbed his tired eyes. He still felt remiss. He ran back through the symptoms, touching each like a boy going back to touch slats on a white picket fence. Which one had ha missed? he wondered. Which?

The answer, he concluded wearily, was None.

He returned the journal to the desk.







Karras was in turmoil, his own shock of realization increasing, the calmer she grew. Quiet sniffles now. Intermittent catches in the throat. And now the weight was on his back again, heavy and oppressive. He inwardly stiffened. No more! Say no more! "Do you want to tell me more?" he asked her gently.

Chris nodded. Exhaled. She wiped at an eye and spoke haltingly, in spasms, of Kinderman; of the book; of her certainty that Dennings had been up in Regan's bedroom; of Regan's great strength; of the Dennings personality that Chris thought she had seen with the head turned around and facing backward.

She finished. Now she waited for Karras' reaction. For a time he did not speak as he thought it all over. Then at last he said softly, "You don't know that she did it."

"But the head turned around," said Chris.

"You'd hit your own head pretty hard against the wall," Karras answered. "You were also in shock. You imagined it."

"She told me that she did it," Chris intoned without expression.

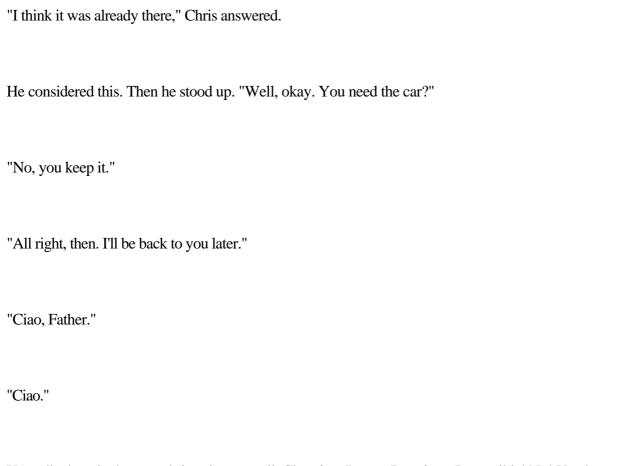
A pause. "And did she tell you how?" Karras asked.

Chris shook her head. He turned and looked at her. "No," she said. "No."

"Then it doesn't mean a thing," Karras told her. "No, it wouldn't mean a thing unless she gave you details that no one else could conceivably know but the killer."

She was shaking her head in doubt. "I don't know," she answered. "I don't know if I'm doing what's right. I think she did it and she could kill someone else. I don't know...." She paused. "Father, what should I do?" she asked him hopelessly.

The weight was now set in concrete; in drying, it had shaped itself to his back.
He rested an elbow on his knee and closed his eyes. "Well, you've told someone now," he said quietly. "You've done what you should. Now forget it. Just put it away and leave it all up to me."
He felt her gaze on him and looked at her. "Are you feeling any better now?"
She nodded.
"Will you do me a favor?" he asked her.
"What?"
"Go out and see a movie."
She wiped at an eye with the back of her hand and smiled. "I hate 'em."
"Then go visit a friend."
She put her hands in her lap and looked at him warmly. "Got a friend right here," she said at last.
He smiled. "Get some rest," he advised her.
"I will."
He had another thought. "You think Dennings brought the book upstairs? Or was it there?"



He walked out in the street brimming turmoil. Churning. Regan. Dennings. Impossible! No! Yet there was Chris's near conviction, her reaction, her hysteria. And that's just what it: hysterical imagining. And yet... He chased certainties like leaves in a knifing wind.

As he passed by the long flight of steps near the house, he heard a sound from below, by the river. He stopped and looked down toward the C&O Canal. A harmonica. Someone playing "Red River Valley," since boyhood Karras' favorite song. He listened until traffic noise drowned it out, until his drifting reminiscence was shattered by a world that was now and in torment, that was shrieking for help, dripping blood on exhaust fumes. He thrust his hands into his pockets. Thought feverishly. Of Chris. Of Regan. Of Lucas aiming kicks at Tranquille. He must do something. What? Could he hope to outguess the clinicians at Barringer? "...go to Central Casting!" Yes; yes, he knew that was the answer; the hope. He remembered the case of Achille. Possessed. Like Regan, he had called himself a devil; like Regan, his disorder had been rooted in guilt; remorse over marital infidelity. The psychologist Janet had effected a cure by hypnotically suggesting the presence of the wife; who appeared to Achille's hallucinated eyes and solemnly forgave him. Karras nodded. Suggestion could work for Regan. But not through hypnosis. They had tried that at Barringer. No. The counteracting suggestion for Regan, he believed, was the ritual of exorcism. She knew what it was; knew its effect. Her reaction to the holy water. Got that from the book. And in the book, there were descriptions of successful exorcisms. It could work! It could! It could work! But how to get permission from the Chancery Office? How to build up a case without mention of Dennings? Karras could not lie to the Bishop. Would not falsify the facts. But you can let the facts speak for themselves!

What facts?
He ran a hand across his brow. Needed sleep. Could not sleep. He felt his temples pound in headache. "Hello, Daddy?"
What facts?
The tapes at the Institute. What would Frank find? Was there anything he could find? No. But who knew? Regan hadn't known holy water from tap water. Sure. But if supposedly she's able to read my mind, why is it she didn't know the difference between them? He put a hand to his forehead. The headache. Confusion. Jesus, Karras, wake up! Someone's dying! Wake up!
Back in his room, he celled the institute. No Frank. He put down the telephone. Holy Water. Tap water. Something. He opened up the Ritual to "Instructions to Exorcists": "evil spiritsdeceptive answers so it might appear that the afflicted one is in no way possessed" Karras pondered. Was that it? What the hell are you talking about? What "evil spirit"?
He slammed shut the book and saw the medical records. He reread them, scanning quickly for anything that might help with the Bishop.
Hold it. No history of hysteria. That's something. But weak. Something else. Some discrepancy. What was it? He dredged desperately through memories of his studies. And then he recalled it. Not much. But something.
He picked up the phone and called Chris. She sounded groggy.
"Hi, Father."
"Were you sleeping? I'm sorry."

"It's okay."
"Chris, where's this Doctor" Karras ran a finger down the records. "Doctor Klein?"
"In Rosslyn."
"In the medical building?"
"Yes."
"Please call him and tell him Doctor Karras will be by and that I'd like to take a look at Regan's EEG. Fell him Doctor Karras, Chris. Have you got that?"
"Got It."
"I'll talk to you later."
When he'd hung up the phone, Karras snapped off his collar and got out of his clerical robe and black rousers, changing quickly into khaki pants and a sweatshirt. Over these he wore his priest's black

When he'd hung up the phone, Karras snapped off his collar and got out of his clerical robe and black trousers, changing quickly into khaki pants and a sweatshirt. Over these he wore his priest's black raincoat, buttoning it up to the collar. He looked in a mirror and frowned. Priests and policemen, he thought, as he quickly unbuttoned the raincoat: their clothing had identifying smells one couldn't hide. Karras slipped off his shoes and got into the only pair he owned that were not black, his scuffed white tennis shoes.

In Chris's car, he drove quickly toward Rosslyn. As he waited on M Street for the light to cross the bridge, he glanced right through the window and saw something disturbing: Karl getting out of a black sedan on Thirty-fifth Street in front of the Dixie Liquor Store. The driver of the car was Lieutenant Kinderman.

The light changed. Karras gunned the car and shot forward, turning onto the bridge, then looked back

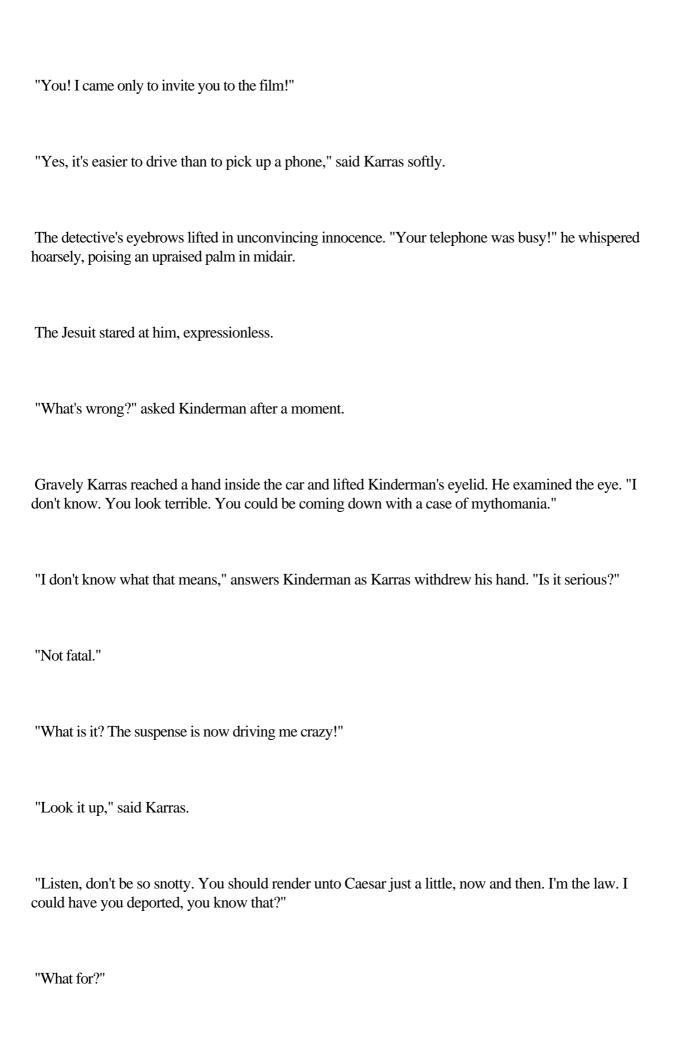




He drove back toward Chris's house, but at a stop sign at the corner of Prospect and Thirty-fifth he froze behind the wheel: parked between Karras and the Jesuit residence hall was Kinderman. He was sitting alone behind the wheel with his elbow out the window, looking straight ahead.
Karras took a right before Kinderman could see him in Chris's Jaguar. Quickly he found a space, parked and locked the car. Then he walked around the corner as if heading for the residence hall. Is he watching the house? he worried. The specter of Dennings rose up again to haunt him. Was it possible that Kinderman thought Regan had?
Easy. Slow down. Take it easy.
He walked up beside the car and leaned his head through the window on the passenger side. "Hello, Lieutenant."
The detective turned quickly and looked surprised. Then beamed. "Father Karras."
Off key, thought Karras. He noticed that his hands were feeling dampish and cold. Play it light! Don't let him know that you're worried! Play it light! "Don't you know you'll get a ticket? Weekdays, no parking between four and six."
"Never mind that," wheezed Kinderman. "Im talking to a priest. Every cop in this neighborhood is Catholic or passing."
"How've you been?"
"Speaking plainly, Father Karras, only so-so. Yourself?"

"Can't complain. Did you ever solve that case?"





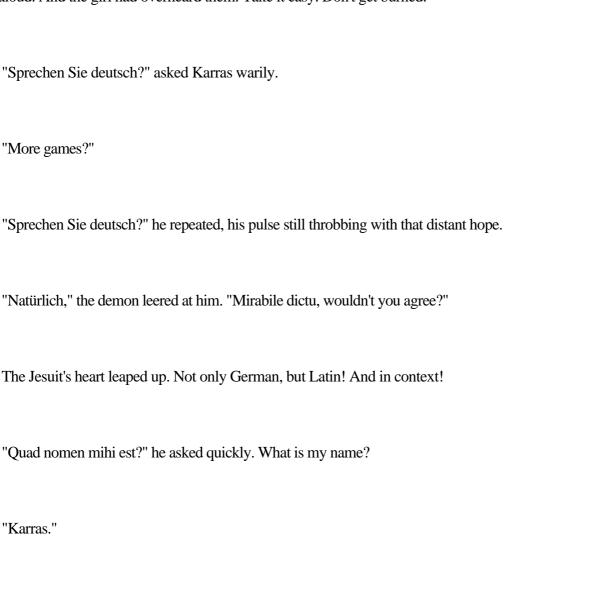
"A psychiatrist shouldn't make people worry. Plus also the goyim, plainly speaking, would love it. You're a nuisance to them altogether anyway, Father. No, frankly, you embarrass them. They would love to get rid of you. Who needs it? a priest who wears sweatshirts and sneakers!"
Smiling faintly, Karras nodded. "Got to go. Take care." He tapped a hand on the window frame, twice, in farewell, and then turned and walked slowly toward the entry of the residence.
"See an analyst!" the detective called after him hoarsely. Then his warm look gave way to worry. He glanced through his windshield up at the house, then started the engine and drove up the street. Passing Karras, he honked his horn and waved.
Karras waved back; watching Kinderman round the corner of Thirty-sixth. Then he stood motionless for a while on the sidewalk, rubbing gently at his brow with a trembling hand. Could she really have done it? Could Regan have murdered Burke Dennings so horribly? With feverish eyes, he looked up at Regan's window. What in God's name is in that house? And how much longer before Kinderman demanded to see Regan? had a chance to see the Dennings personality? to hear it? How much longer before Regan would be institutionalized?
Or die?
He had to build the case for the Chancery.
He walked quickly across the street at an angle to Chris's house. He rang the doorbell.
Willie let him in.
"Missiz taking little nap now," she said.
Karras nodded. "Good. Very good." He walked by her and upstairs to Regan's bedroom. He was seeking a knowledge he must clutch by the heart.



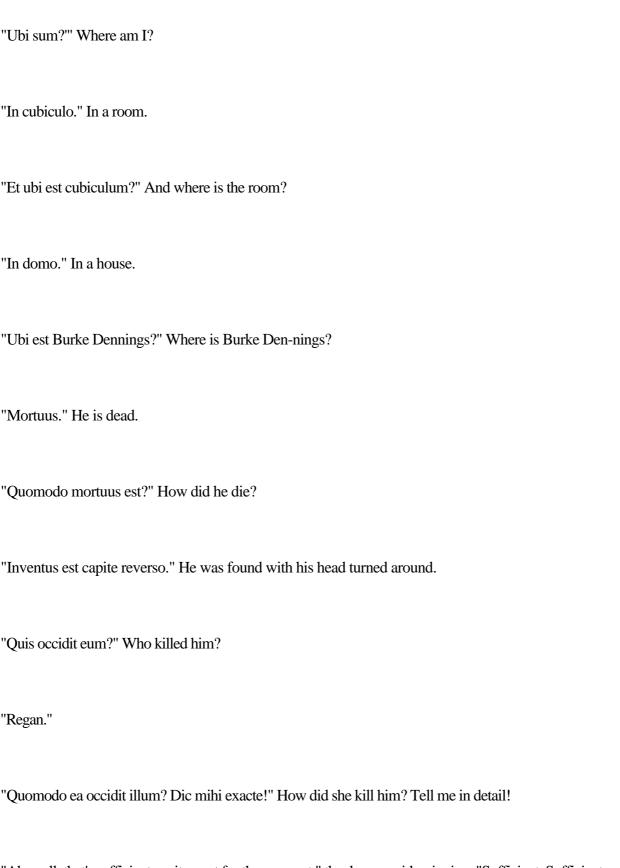
After a moment of dogged resistance, Karl gave way and hurried from the room.

The laughter had stopped. Karras turned back. The demon was watching him. It looked pleased. "So you're back," it croaked. "I'm surprised. I would think that embarrassment over the holy water might have discouraged you from ever returning. But then I forget that a priest has no shame."

Karras breathes shallowly and forced himself to rein his expectations, to think clearly. He knew that the language test in possession required intelligent conversation as proof that whatever was said was not traceable to buried linguistic recollections. Easy! Slow down! Remember that girl? A teen-age servant. Possessed. In delirium, she'd babbled a language that finally was recognized to be Syriac. Karras forces himself to think of the excitement it had caused, of how finally it was learned that the girl had at one time been employed in a boardinghouse where one of the lodgers was a student of theology. On the eve of examinations, he would pace in his room and walk up and down stairs while reciting his Syriac lessons aloud. And the girl had overheard them. Take it easy. Don't get burned.

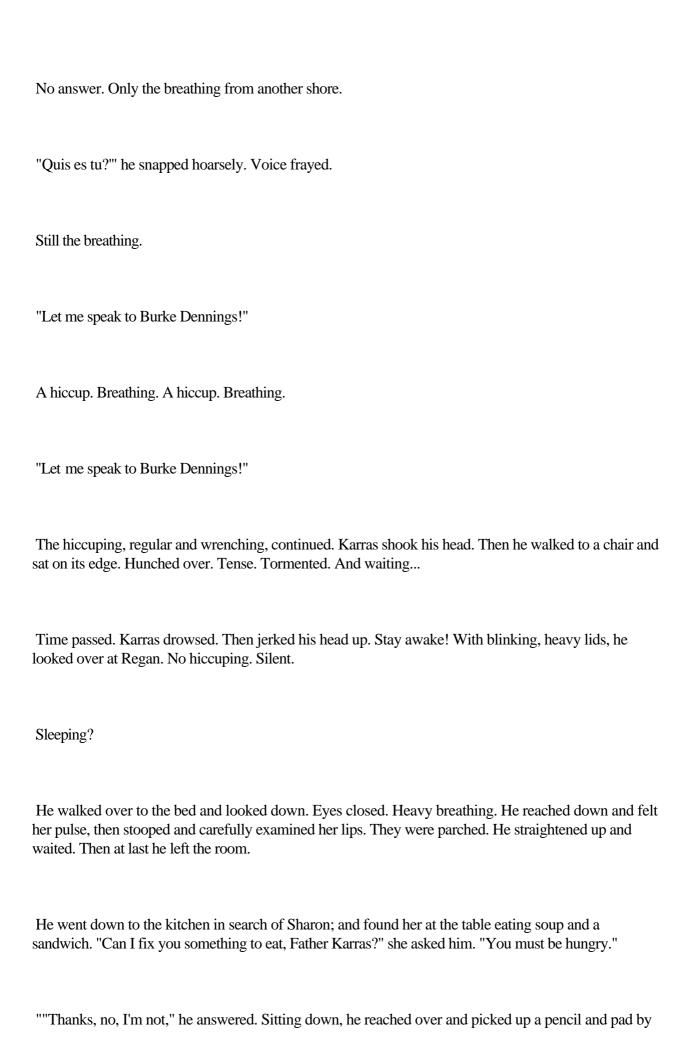


And now the priest rushed on with excitement.

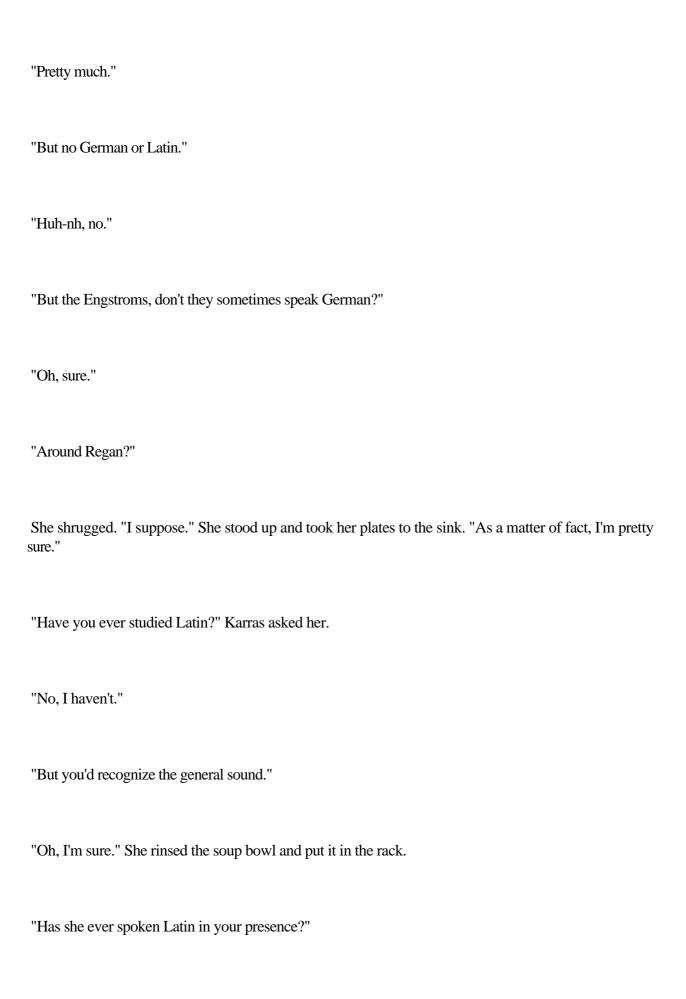


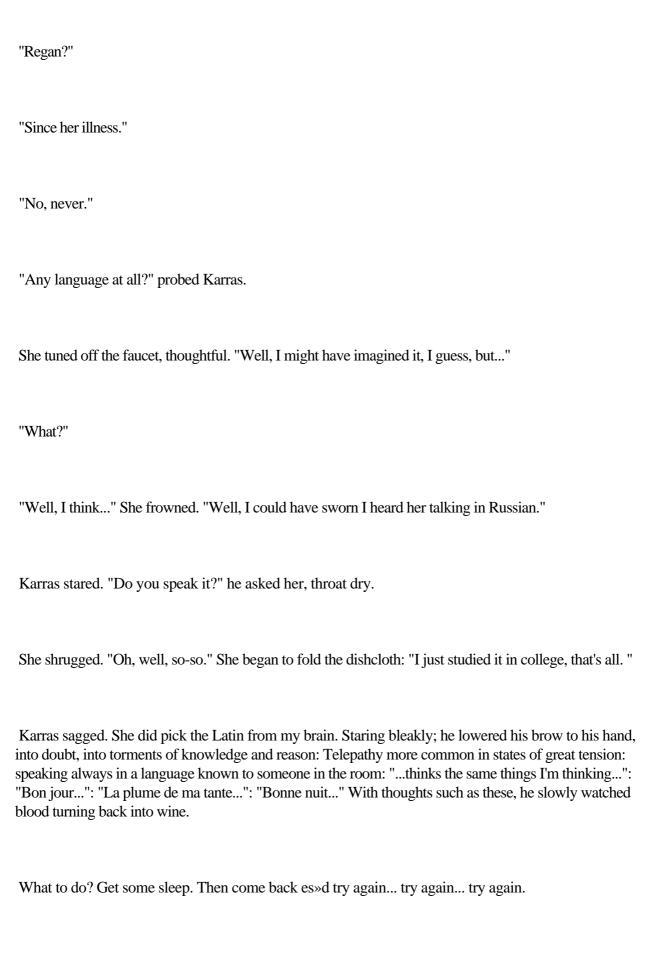
"Ah, well, that's sufficient excitement for the moment," the demon said, grinning. "Sufficient. Sufficient altogether. Though of course it will occur to you, I suppose, that while you were asking your questions in Latin, you were mentally formulating answers in Latin." It laughed. "All unconscious, of course. Yes, whatever would we do without unconsciousness? Do you see what I'm driving at, Karras? I cannot speak Latin at all. I read your mind. I merely plucked the responses from your head!"

Karras felt an instant dismay as his certainty crumbled, felt tantalized and frustrated by the nagging doubt now planted in his brain.
The demon chuckled. "Yes, I knew that would occur to you, Karras," it croaked at him. "That is why I'm fond of you. That is why I cherish all reasonable men." Its head tilted back in a spate of laughter.
The Jesuit's mind raced rapidly, desperately; formulating questions to which there was no single answer, but rather many. But maybe I'd think of them all! he realized. Okay! Then ask a question that you don't know the answer to! He could check the answer later to see if it was correct.
He waited for the laughter to ebb before hd spoke:
"Quam profundus est imus Oceanus Indicus?" What is the depth of the Indian Ocean at its deepest point?
The demon's eyes glittered: "La plume de ma tante," it rasped.
"Responde Latine."
"Bon jour! Bonne nuit!"
"Quam"
Karras broke off as the eyes rolled upward into their sockets and the gibberish entity appeared.
Impatient and frustrated, Karras demanded, "Let me speak to the demon again!"



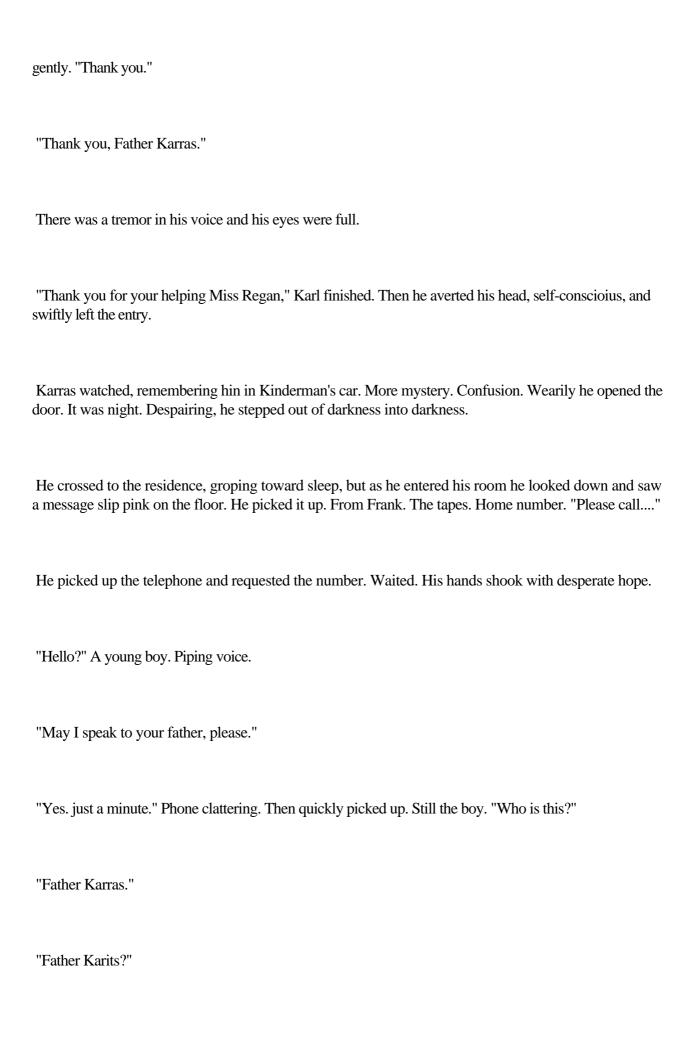






He stood up and looked blearily at Sharon. She was leaning with her back against the sink, arms folded, watching him thoughtfully. "I'm going over to the residence," he told her. "As soon as Regan's awake, I'd

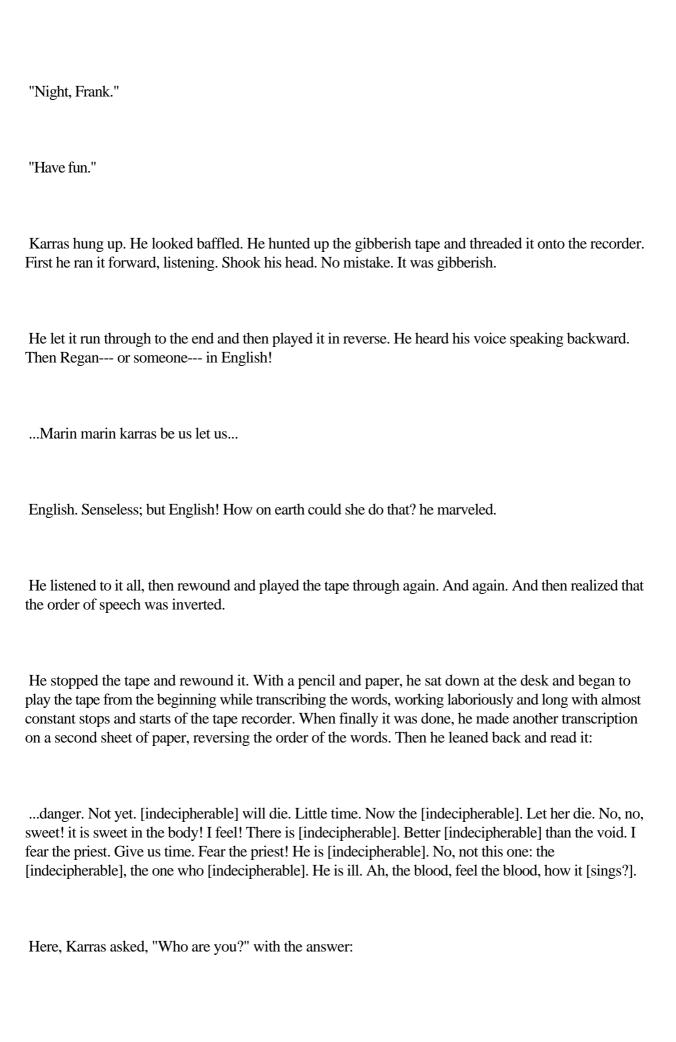


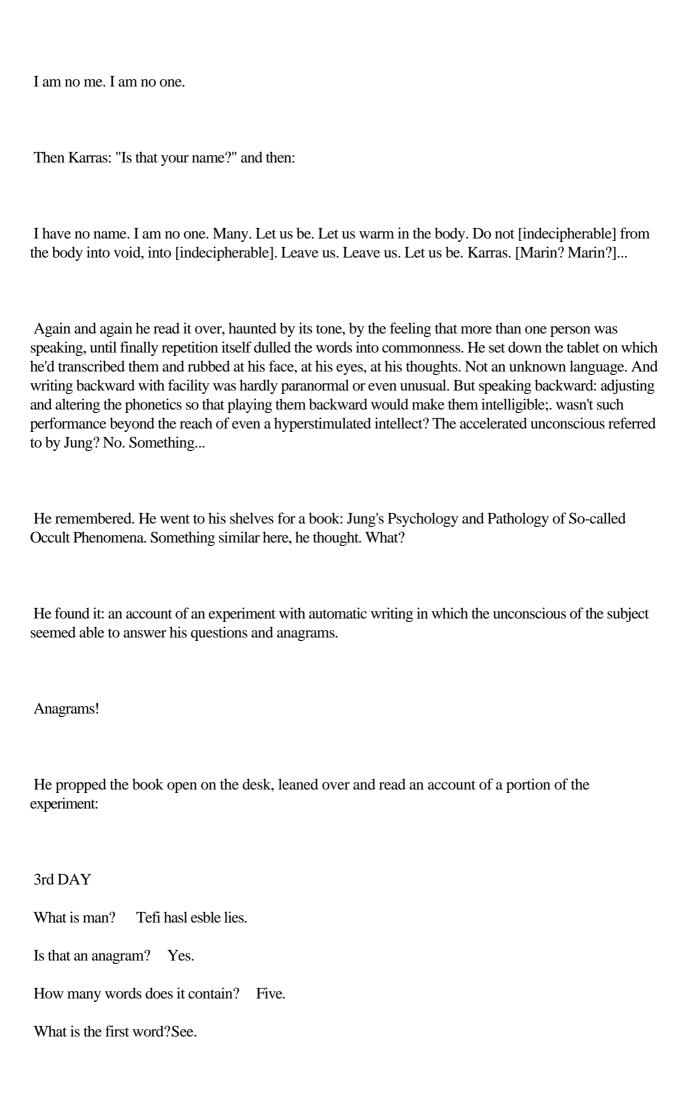






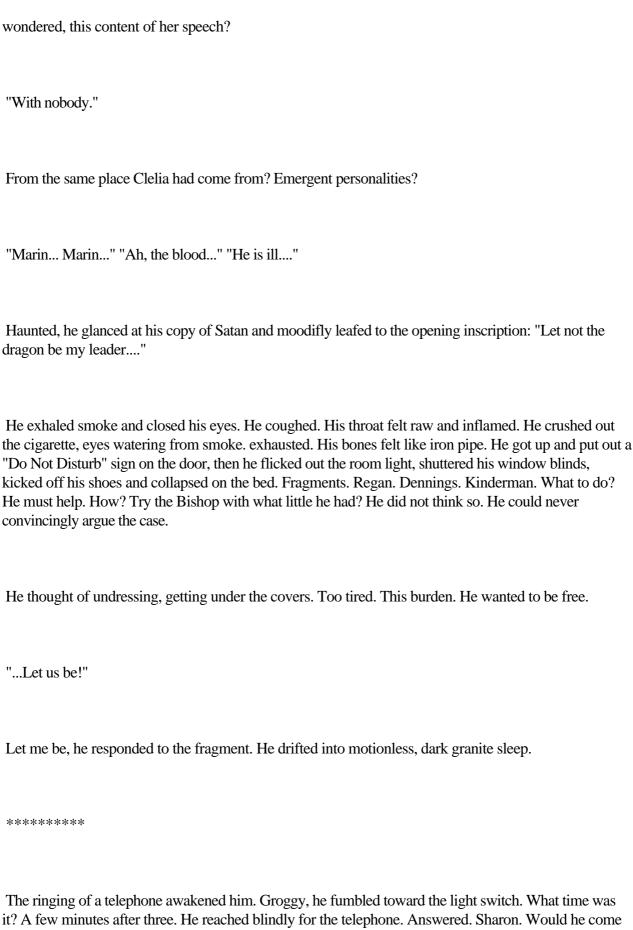






What is the second word? Eeeee. See? Shall I interpret it myself? Try to! The subject found this solution: "The life is less able." He was astonished at this intellectual pronouncement, which seemed to him to prove the existence of an intelligence independent of his own. He therefore went on to ask: Who are you? Clelia. Are you a woman? Yes. No. Have you lived on earth? Will you come to life? Yes. When?In six years. Why are you conversing with me? E if Cledia el. The subject interpreted this answer as an anagram for "I Clelia feel." 4TH DAY Am I the one who answers the questions? Yes. Is Clelia there? No. Who is there, then? Nobody. Does Clelia exist at all? No. Then with whom was I speaking yesterday? With nobody. Karras stopped reading. Shook his head. Here was no paranormal performance: only the limitless abilities of the mind.

He reached for a cigarette, sat down and lit it. "I am no one. Many." Eerie. Where did it come from, he



to the house right away? He would come. He hung up the telephone, feeling trapped again, smothered and enmeshed.

He went into the bathroom and splashed cold water on his face, dried off and then started from the room, but at the door, he turned around and came back for his sweater. He pulled it over his head and then went out into the street.

The air was thin and still in the darkness. Some cats at a garbage can scurried in fright as he crossed toward the house.

Sharon met him at the door. She was wearing a sweater and was draped in a blanket. She looked frightened. Bewildered. "Sorry, Father," she whispered as he entered the house, "but I thought you ought to see this."

"What?"

"You'll see. Let's be quiet, now. I don't want to wake up Chris. She shouldn't see this." She beckoned.

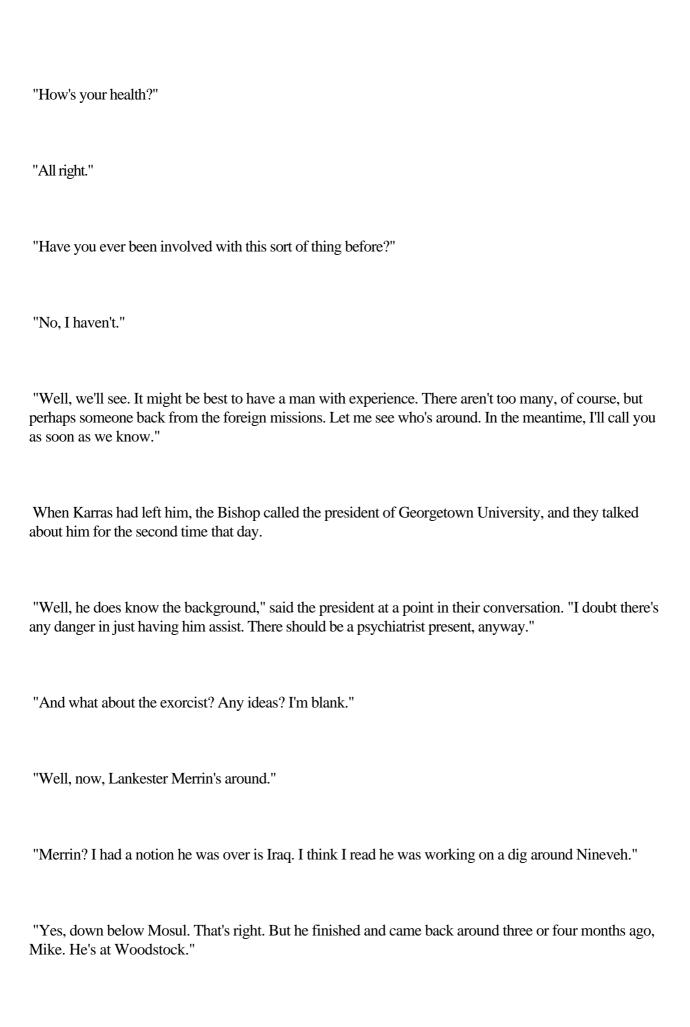
He followed her, tiptoeing quietly up the stairs to Regan's bedroom. Entering, the Jesuit felt chilled to the bone. The room was icy. He frowned in bewilderment at Sharon, and she nodded at him solemnly. "Yes. Yes, the heat's on," she whispered. Then she turned and stared at Regan, at the whites of her eyes glowing eerily in lamplight. She seemed to be in coma. Heavy breathing. Motionless. The nasogastric tube was in place, the Sustagen seeping slowly into her body.

Sharon moved quietly toward the bedside and Karras followed, still staggered by the cold. When they stood by the bed, he saw beads of perspiration on Regan's forehead; glanced down and saw her hands gripped firmly in the restraining straps.

Sharon. She was bending, gently pulling the top of Regan's pajamas wide apart, and an overwhelming pity hit Karras at the sight of the wasted chest, the protruding ribs where one might count the remaining weeks or days of her life.

He felt Sharon's haunted eyes upon him. "I don't know if it's stopped," she whispered. "But watch: just keep looking at her chest."







"Well, what do you think?"
"Look, I'll leave it up to you and the Provincial."
Early that silently waiting evening, a young scholastic preparing for the priesthood wandered the grounds of Woodstock Seminary in Maryland. He was searching for a slender, gray-haired old Jesuit. He found him on a pathway, strolling through a grove. He handed him a telegram. The old man thanked him, serene, eyes kindly, then turned and renewed his contemplation; continued his walk through a nature that he loved. Now and then he would pause to hear the song of a robin, to watch a bright butterfly hover on a branch. He did not open and read the telegram. He knew what it said. He had known. He had read it in the dust of the temples of Nineveh. He was ready.
He continued his farewells.
(End of part three * Scanned and fully proofed by nihua)
IV: "And let my
cry come
unto Thee"
"He who abides in love, abides in God, and God in him"Saint Paul.

CHAPTER ONE

In the breathing dark of his quiet office, Kinderman brooded above his desk.

He adjusted the desk-lamp beams a fraction. Below him were records, transcripts, exhibits; police files; crime-lab reports; scribbled notes. In a pensive mood, he had carefully fashioned them into a collage in the shape of a rose, as if to belie the ugly conclusion to which they had led him; that he could not accept.

Engstrom was innocent. At the time of Dennings' death, he had been visiting his daughter, supplying her with money for the purchase of drugs. He had lied about his whereabouts that night in order to protect her and to shield her mother, who believed Elvira to be dead and past all harm and degradation.

It was not from Karl that Kinderman had learned this. On the night of their encounter in Elvira's hallway, the servant remained obdurately silent. It was only when Kinderman apprised the daughter of her father's involvement in the Dennings case that Elvira volunteered the truth. There were witnesses to confirm it. Engstrom was innocent. Innocent and silent concerning events in Chris MacNeil's house.

Kinderman frowned at the rose collage. Something was wrong with the composition. He shifted a petal point--- the corner of a deposition--- a trifle lower and to the right.

Roses. Elvira. He had warned her grimly that failure to check herself into a clinic within two weeks would result in his dogging her trail with warrants until he had evidence to effect her arrest. Yet he did not really believe she would go. There were times when he stared at the law unblinkingly as he would the noonday sun in the hope it would temporarily blind him while some quarry made its escape.

Engstrom was innocent. What remained?

Kinderman, wheezing, shifted his weight. Then he closed his eyes and imagined he was soaking in a lapping hot bath. Mental Closeout Sale! he bannered at himself: Moving to New Conclusions! Positively Everything Must Go! For a moment he waited, unconvinced. Then, Positively! he added sternly.

He opened his eyes and examined afresh the bewildering data.

Item: The death of director Burke Dennings seemed somehow linked to the desecrations at Holy Trinity. Both involved witchcraft and the unknown desecrator could easily be Dennings' murderer.

Item: An expert on witchcraft, a Jesuit priest, had been seen making visits to the home of the MacNeils.

Item: The typewritten sheet of paper containing the text of the blasphemous altar card discovered at Holy Trinity had been checked for latent fingerprints. Impressions had been found on both sides. Some had been made by Damien Karras. But still another set had been found that, from their size, were adjudged to be those of a person with very small hands, quite possibly a child.

Item: The typing on the altar card had been analyzed and compared with the typed impressions on the unfinished letter that Sharon Spencer had pulled from her typewriter, crumpled up, and tossed at a wastepaper basket, missing it, while Kinderman had been questioning Chris. He had picked it up and smuggled it out of the house. The typing on this letter and the typing on the altar-card sheet had been done on the same machine. According to the reports however, the touch of the typists differed. The person who had typed the blasphemous text had a touch far heavier than Sharon Spencer's. Since the typing of the former, moreover, had not been "hunt and peck" but, rather, skillfully accomplished, it suggested that the unknown typist of the altar-card text was a person of extraordinary strength.

Item: Burke Dennings--- if his death was not an accident--- had been killed by a person of extraordinary strength.

Item: Engstrom was no longer a suspect.

Item: A check of domestic airline reservations disclosed that Chris MacNeil had taken her daughter to Dayton, Ohio. Kinderman had known that the daugh-ter was ill and was being taken to a clinic. But the clinic in Dayton would have to be Barringer. Kinderman had checked and the clinic confirmed that the daughter had been in for observation. Though the clinic refused to state the nature of the illness, it was obviously a serious mental disorder.

Item: Serious mental disorders at times caused extraordinary strength.

Kinderman sighed and closed his eyes. The same. He was back to the same conclusion. He shook his head. Then he opened his eyes and stared at the center of the paper rose: a faded old copy of a national news magazine. On the cover were Chris and Regan. He studied the daughter: the sweet, freckled face and the ribboned ponytails, the missing front tooth in the grin. He looked out a window into darkness. A drizzling rain had begun to fall.

He went down to the garage, got into the unmarked black sedan and then drove through rain-slick, shining streets to the Georgetown area, where he parked on the eastern side of Prospect Street. And sat. For a quarter of an hour. Sat. Staring at Regan's window. Should he knock at the door and demand to see her? He lowered his head. Rubbed at his brow. William F. Kinderman, you are sick! You are ill! Go home! Take medicine! Sleep!

He looked up at the window again and ruefully shook his head. Here his haunted logic had led him.

He shifted his gaze as a cab pulled up to the house. He started the engine and turned on the windshield wipers.

From the cab stepped a tall old man. Black raincoat and hat and a battered valise. He paid the driver, then turned and stood motionless, staring at the house. The cab pulled away and rounded the corner of Thirty-sixth Street. Kinderman quickly pulled out to follow. As he turned the corner, he noticed that the tall old man hadn't moved, but was standing under street-light glow, in mist, like a melancholy traveler frozen in time. The detective blinked his lights at the taxi.

Inside, at that moment, Karras and Karl pinned Regan's arms while Sharon injected her with Librium, bringing the total amount injected in the last two hours to four hundred milligrams. The dosage, Karras knew, was staggering. But after a lull of many hours, the demonic personality had suddenly awaked in a fit of fury so frenzied that Regan's debilitated system could not for very long endure it.

Karras was exhausted. After his visit to the Chancery Office that morning, he returned to the house to tell Chris what had happened Then he set up an intravenous feeding for Regan, went back to his room and fell on his bed. After only an hour and a half of sleep, however, the telephone had wrenched him awake. Sharon. Regan was still unconscious and her pulse had been gradually slipping lower. Karras had then rushed to the house with his medical bag and pinched Regan's Achilles tendon, looking for reaction to pain. There was none. He pressed down hard on one of her fingernails. Again no reaction. He was worried. Though he knew that in hysteria and in states of trance there was sometimes an insensitivity to pain, he now feared coma, a state from which Regan might slip easily into death. He checked her blood pressure: ninety over sixty; then pulse rate: sixty. He had waited in the room then, and checked her again every fifteen min-utes for an hour and a half before he was satisfied that blood pressure and pulse rate

had stabilized, meaning Regan was not in shock but in a state of stupor. Sharon was instructed to continue to check the pulse each hour. Then he'd returned to his room and his sleep. But again the telephone woke him up. The exorcist, the Chancery Office told him, would be Lankester Merrin. Karras would assist.

The news had stunned him. Merrin! the philosopher-paleontologist! the soaring, staggering intellect! His books had stirred ferment in the Church; for they interpreted his faith in the terms of science, in terms of a matter that was still evolving, destined to be spirit and joined to God.

Karras telephoned Chris at once to convey the news, but found that she'd heard from the Bishop directly. He had told her that Merrin would arrive the next day. "I told the Bishop he could stay at the house," Chris said. "It'll just be a day or so, won't it?" Before answering, Karras paused. "I don't know." And then, pausing again, said, "You mustn't expect too much." "If it works, I mean," Chris had answered. Her tone had been subdued. "I didn't mean to imply that it wouldn't," he reassured her. "I just meant that it might take time." "How long?" "It varies." He knew that an exorcism often took weeks, even months; knew that frequently it failed altogether. He expected the latter; expected that the burden, barring cure through suggestion, would fall once again, and at the last, upon him. "It can take a few days or weeks," he'd then told her. "How long has she got, Father Karras?..."

When he hung up the phone, he'd felt heavy, tormented. Stretched out on the bed, he thought of Merrin. Merrin! An excitement and a hope seeped through him. A sinking disquiet followed. He himself had been the natural choice for exorcist, yet the Bishop had passed him over. Why? Because Merrin had done this before?

As he closed his eyes, he recalled that exorcists were selected on the basis of "piety" and "high moral qualities"; that a passage in the gospel of Matthew related that Christ, when asked by his disciples the cause of their failure in an effort at exorcism, had answered them: "...because of your little faith."

The Provincial had known about his problem; so had the president, Karras reflected. Had either told the Bishop?

He had turned on his bed then, damply despondent; felt somehow unworthy; incompetent; rejected. It stung. Unreasonably, it stung. Then, finally, sleep came pouring into emptiness, filling in the niches and cracks in his heart.

But again the ring of the phone woke him, Chris calling to inform him of Regan's new frenzy. Back at the house, he checked Regan's pulse. It was strong. He gave Librium, then again. And again. Finally, he

made his way to the kitchen, briefly joining Chris at the table for coffee. She was reading a book, one of Merrin's that she'd ordered delivered to the house. "Way over my head," she told him softly, yet she looked touched and deeply moved. "But there's some of it so beautiful--- so great." She flipped back through pages to a passage she had marked, and handed the book across the table to Karras. He read:

...We have familiar experience of the order, the constancy, the perpetual renovation of the material world which surrounds us. Frail and transitory as is every part of it, restless and migratory as are its elements, still it abides. It is bound together by a law of permanence, and though it is ever dying, it is ever coming to life again. Dissolution does but give birth to fresh modes of organization, and one death is the parent of a thousand lives. Each hour, as it comes, is but a testimony how fleeting, yet how secure; how certain, is the great whole. It is like an image on the waters, which is ever the same, though the waters ever flow. The sun sinks to rise again; the day is swallowed up in the gloom of night, to be born out of it, as fresh as if it had never been quenched. Spring passes into summer, and through summer and autumn into winter, only the more surely, by its own ultimate return, to triumph over that grave towards which it resolutely hastened from its first hour. We mourn the blossoms of May because they are to wither; but we know that May is one day to have its revenge upon November, by the revolution of that solemn circle which never stops--- which teaches us in our height of hope, ever to be sober, and in our depth of desplation, never to despair.

"Yes, it's beautiful," Karras said softly. His eyes were still on the page. The raging of the demon from upstairs grew louder.

"...bastard ...scum ...pious hypocrite!"

"She used to put a rose on my plate... in the morning... before I'd go to work."

Karras looked up with a question in his eyes. "Regan," Chris told him.

She looked down. "Yeah, that's right. I forget... you've never met her." She blew her nose and dabbed at her eyes. "Want some brandy in that coffee, Father Karras?" she asked.

"Thanks, I don't think so."

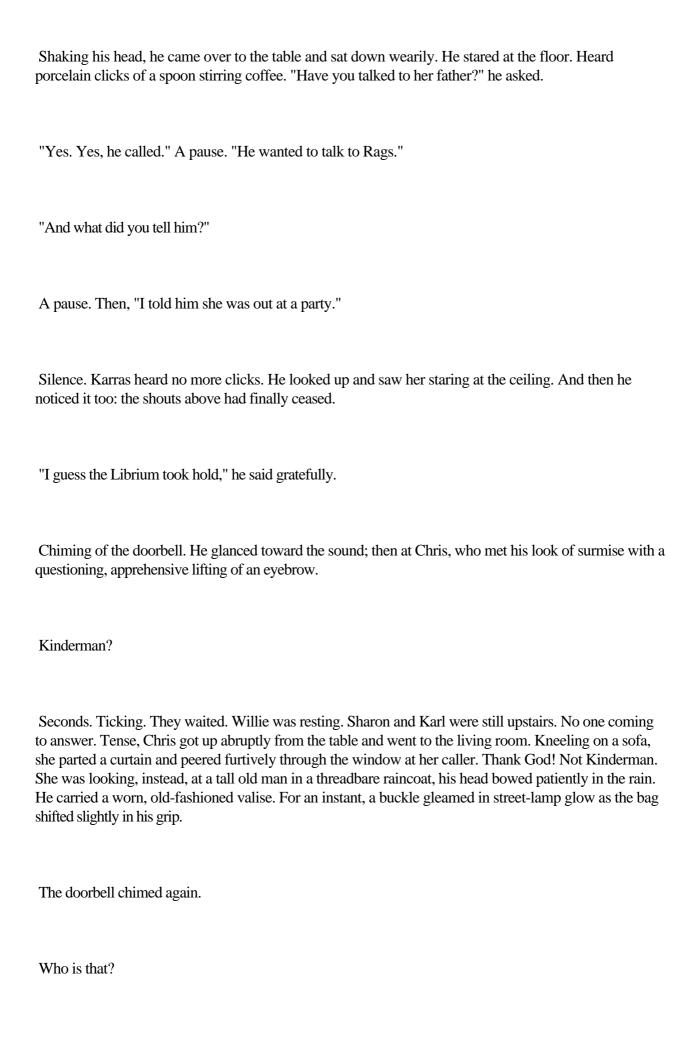
"Coffee's flat," she whispered tremulously. "I think I'll get some brandy. Excuse me." She quickly left the kitchen.

Karras sat alone and sipped bleakly at his coffee. He felt warm in the sweater that he wore beneath his cassock; felt weak in his failure to have given Chris comfort. Then a memory of childhood shimmered up sadly, a memory of Ginger, his mongrel dog, growing skeletal and dazed in a box in the apartment; Ginger shivering with fever and vomiting while Karras covered her with towels, tried to make her drink warm milk, until a neighbor came by and saw it was distemper, shook his head and said, "Your dog needed shots right away." Then dismissed from school one after-noon... to the street... in columns of twos to the corner... his mother there to meet him... unexpected... looking sad... and then taking his hand to press a shiny half-dollar piece into it... elation... so much money!... then her voice, soft and tender, "Gingie die...."

"Gingie die"
He looked down at the steaming, bitter blackness in his cup and felt his hands empty of comfort or of cure.
"pious bastard!"
The demon. Still raging.
"Your dog needed shots right away"
Quickly he returned to Regan's bedroom, where he held her while Sharon administered the Librium injection that now brought the total dosage up to five hundred milligrams.
Sharon was swabbing the needle puncture while Karras watched Regan, puzzled. The frenzied obscenities seemed to be directed at no one in the room, but rather at someone unseen or not present.
He dismissed the thought. "I'll be back," he told Sharon.

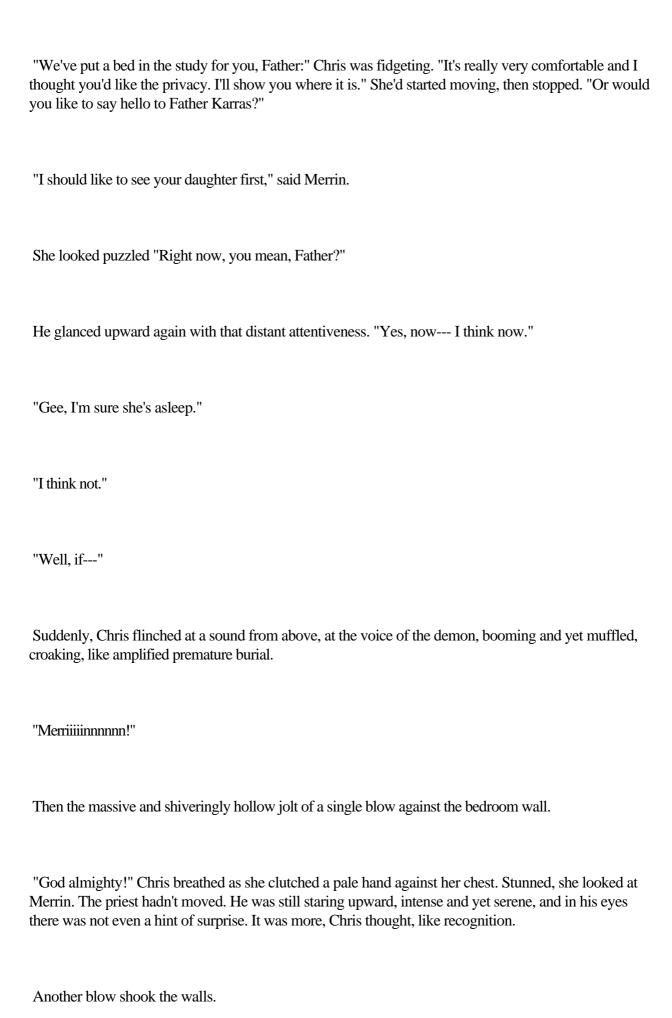
Concerned about Chris, he went down to the kitchen, where again he found her sitting alone at the table.

She was pouring brandy into her coffee. "Are you sure you wouldn't like some, Father?" she asked.

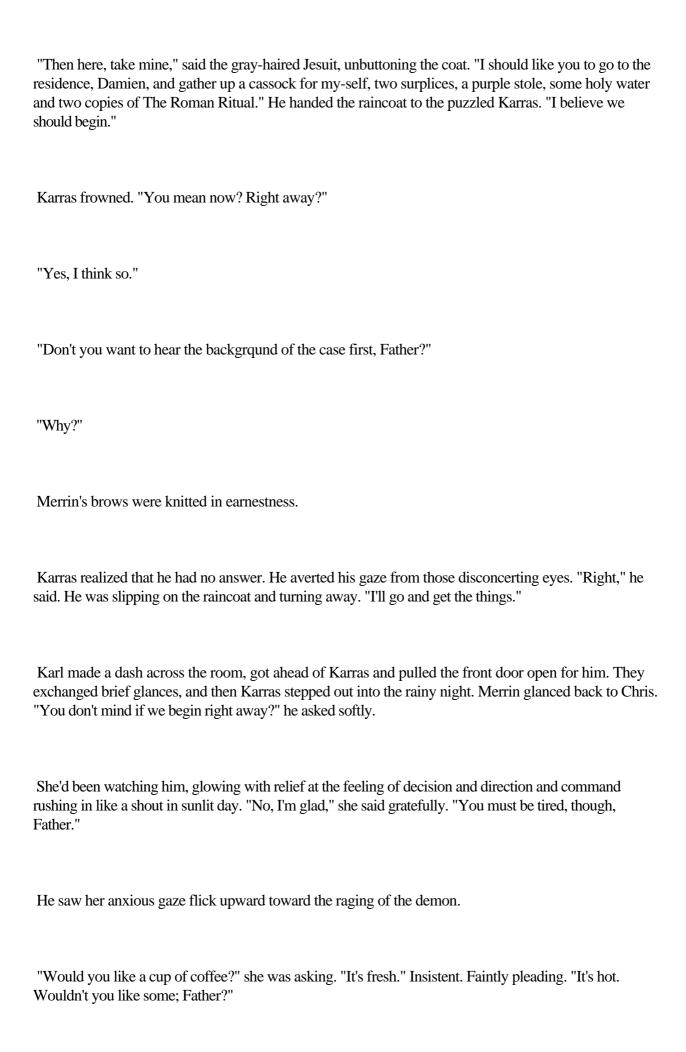




"Can I take that bag for you, Father? It must weigh a ton by now."
"It's all right," he said softly. Still feeling. Still probing. "It's like part of my arm: very old very battered." He looked down with a warm, tired smile in his eyes. "I'm accustomed to the weight Is Father Karras here?" he asked.
"Yes, he is. He's in the kitchen. Have you had any dinner, incidentally, Father?"
He kicked his glance upward at the sound of a door being opened. "Yes, I had some on the train."
"Are you sure you wouldn't like something else?"
A moment. Then sound of the door being closed. He glanced down. "No, thank you."
"Gee, all of this rain," she protested, still flustered. "If I'd known you were coming, I could have met you at the station."
"It's all right."
"Did you have to wait long for a cab?"
"A few minutes."
"I take that, Father!"
Karl. He'd descended the stairs very quickly and now slipped the bag from the priest's easy grip and took it off down the hall.



"Merriiiinnnnnnnnn!"
The Jesuit moved slowly forward, oblivious of Chris, who was gaping in wonder; of Karl, stepping lithe and incredulous from the study; of Karras, emerging bewildered from the kitchen while the nightmarish poundings and croakings continued. He went calmly up the staircase, slender hand like alabaster sliding upward on the banister.
Karras came up beside Chris, and together they watched from below as Merrin entered Regan's bedroom and closed the door behind him. For a time there was silence. Then abruptly the demon laughed hideously and Merrin came out. He closed the door and started down the hall. Behind him, the bedroom door opened again and Sharon poked her head out, staring -after him, an odd expression on her face.
The Jesuit descended the staircase rapidly and put out his hand to the waiting Karras.
"Father Karras"
"Hello, Father."
Merrin had clasped the other priest's hand in both of his; he was squeezing it, searching Karras' face with a look of gravity and concern, while upstairs the laughter turned to vicious, obscenities directed at Merrin. "You look terribly tired," he said "Are you tired?"
"Not at all. Why do you ask?"
"Do you have your raincoat with you?"
Karras shook his head and said, "No."





"Where does that come from, Father? That name?"

"Damien?" He looked down at his cup. "It was the name of a priest who devoted his life to taking can of the lepers on the island of Molokai. He finally caught the disease himself." He paused. "Lovely name," he said again. "I believe that with a first name like Damien, I might even be content with the last name Glutz."

Chris chuckled. She unwound. Felt easier. And for minutes, she and Merrin spoke of homely things, little things. Finally, Sharon appeared the kitchen, and only then did Merrin move to leave. It was as if he had been waiting for her arrival, for immediately he carried his mug to the sink, rinsed it out and placed it carefully in the dish rack. "That was good; that was just what I wanted," he said.

Chris got up and said, "I'll take you to your room."

He thanked her and followed her to the door of the study. "If there's anything you need; Father," she said, "let me know."

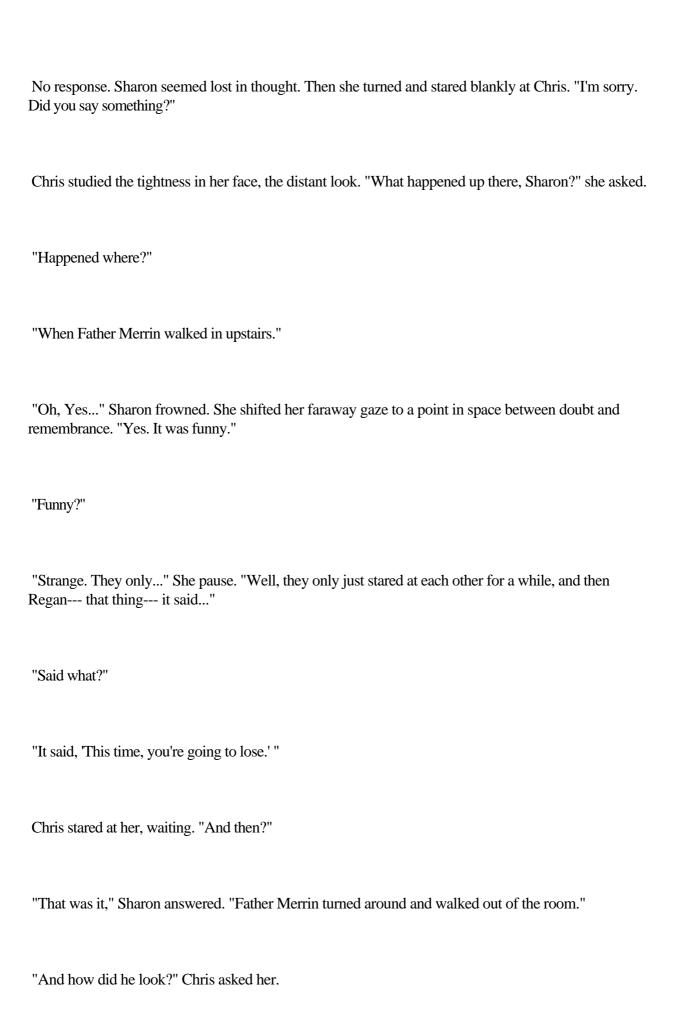
He put his hand on her shoulder and squeezed it reassuringly. Chris felt a power and warmth flowing into her. Peace. She felt peace. And an odd sense of ...safety? she wondered.

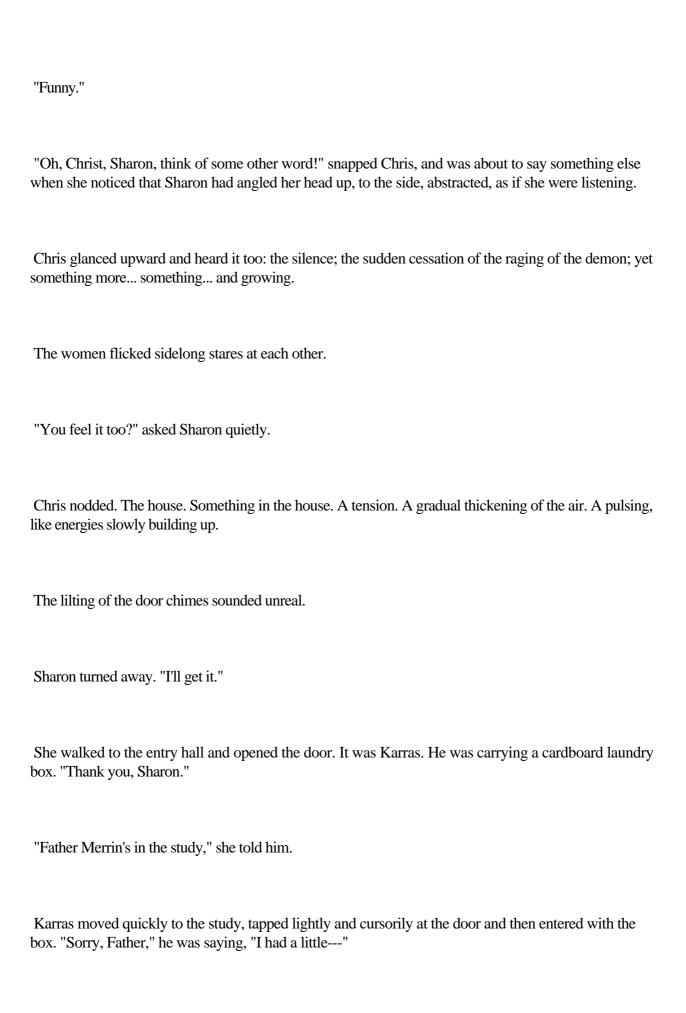
"You're very kind." His eyes smiled. "Thank you."

He removed his hand and watched her walk away. As soon as she was gone, a tightening pain seemed to clutch at his face. He entered the study and closed the door. From a pocket of his trousers, he slipped out a tin marked Bayer Aspirin, opened it, extracted a nitroglycerin pill and placed it carefully under his tongue.

Chris entered the kitchen. Pausing by the door, she looked at Sharon, who was standing by the stove, the palm of her hand against the percolator as she waited for the coffee to reheat.

Chris went over to her, concerned. "Hey, honey," she said softly. "Why don't you get a little rest?"





Karras stopped short. Merrin, in trousers and T-shirt, kneeled in prayer beside the rented bed, his forehead bent low to his tight-clasped hands. Karras stood rooted for a moment, as if he had casually rounded a corner and suddenly encountered his boyhood self with an altar boy's cassock draped over an arm, hurrying by without a glance of recognition.

Karras shifted his eyes to the open laundry box, to speckles of rain on starch. Then slowly, with his gaze still averted, he moved to the sofa and soundlessly laid out the contents of the box. When he finished, he took off the raincoat and draped it carefully over a chair. As he glanced back toward Merrin, he saw the priest blessing himself and he hastily looked away, reaching down for the larger of the white cotton surplices. He began to put it on over his cassock. He heard Merrin rising, and then, "Thank you, Damien." Karras turned to face him, tugging down the surplice while Merrin came over in front of the sofa, his eyes brushing tenderly over its contents.

Karras reached for a sweater. "I thought you might wear this under your cassock, Father," he told Merrin as he handed it over. "The room gets cold at times"

Merrin touched the sweater lightly with his hands. "That was thoughtful of you, Damien."

Karras picket up Merrin's cassock from the sofa, and watched him pull the sweater down over his head, and only now, and very suddenly, while watching this homely, prosaic action, did Karras feel the staggering impact of the man; of the moment; of a stillness in the house, crushing down on him, choking off breath.

He came back to awareness with the feeling of the cassock being tugged from his hands. Merrin. He was slipping it on. "You're familiar with the rules concerning exorcism, Damien?"

"Yes, I am," answered Karras.

Merrin began buttoning up the cassock. "Especially important is the warning to avoid conversations with the demon...."

"The demon." He'd said it so matter-of-factly, thought Karras. It jarred him.

"We may ask what is relevant," said Merrin as he buttoned the collar of the cassock. "But anything beyond that is dangerous. Extremely." He lifted the surplice from Karras' hands and began to slip it over the cassock. "Especially, do not listen to anything he says. The demon is a liar. He will lie to confuse us; but he will also mix lies with the truth to attack us. The attack is psychological, Damien. And powerful. Do not listen. Remember that. Do not listen."

As Karras handed him the stole, the exorcist added, "Is there anything at all you would like to ask now, Damien?"

Karras shook his head. "No. But I think it might be helpful if I gave you some background on the different personalities that Regan has manifested. So far, there seem to be three."

"There is only one," said Merrin softly, slipping the stole around his shoulders. For a moment, he gripped it and stood unmoving as a haunted expression came into his eyes. Then he reached for the copies of the Roman Ritual and gave one to Karras. "We will skip the Litany of the Saints. You have the holy water?"

Karras slipped the slender, cork-tipped vial from his pocket. Merrin took it, then nodded serenely toward the door. "If you will lead, please, Damien."

Upstairs, by the door to Regan's bedroom, Sharon and Chris stood tense and waiting. They were bundled in heavy sweaters and jackets. At the sound of a door coming open, they turned and looked below and saw Karras and Merrin come down the hall to the stairs in solemn procession. Tall: how tall they were, thought Chris; and Karras: the dark of that rock-chipped face above the innocent, altar-boy white of the surplice. Watching them steadily ascending the staircase, Chris felt deeply and strangely moved. Here comes my big brother to beat your brains in, creeps! It was a feeling, she thought, much like that. She could feel her heart begin to beat faster.

At the door of the room, the Jesuits stopped. Karras frowned at the sweater and jacket Chris wore. "You're coming in?"

"Well, I really thought I should."

"Please don't," he urged her. "Don't. You'd be making a great mistake."







As Merrin continued with the next line, Karras heard a gasp from Sharon behind him, and turning quickly around, he saw her looking stupefied at the bed. Puzzled, he looked back. And was instantly electrified. The front of the bed was rising up off the floor! He stared at it incredulously. Four inches. Half a foot. A foot. Then the back legs began to come up. "Gott in Himmel!" Karl whispered in fear. But Karras did not hear him or see him make the sign of the cross on himself as the back of the bed lifted level with the front. It's not happening! he thought, as he watched, transfixed. The bed drifted upward another foot and then hovered there, bobbing and listing gently as if it were floating on a stagnant lake. "Father Karras?" Regan undulating. Hissing. "Father Karras?" Karras turned. The exorcist was eyeing him serenely, and now motioned his head toward the copy of the Ritual in Karras' hands. "The response, please, Damien." Karras looked blank and uncomprehending. Sharon ran from the room. " 'Let the enemy have no power over her,' " Merrin repeated gently. Hastily, Karras glanced back at the text and with a pounding heart breathed out the response: "'And the son of iniquity be powerless to harm her.' "

" 'Lord, hear my prayer,' " continued Merrin.



The bellowing ceased. A ringing silence. Then a thick and putrid greenish vomit began to pump from Regan's mouth in slow and regular spurts that oozed like lava over her lip and flowed in waves onto Merrin's hand. But he did not move it. 'Let your mighty hand cast out this cruel demon from Regan Teresa MacNeil, who'
Karras was dimly aware of a door being opened, of Chris bolting from the room.
"'Drive out this persecutor of the innocent'"
The bed began to rock lazily, then to pitch, and then suddenly it was violently dipping and yawing, and with the vomit still pumping from Regan s mouth, Merrin calmly made adjustments and kept the stole firmly to her neck.
" 'Fill your servants with courage to manfully oppose that reprobate dragon lest he despise those who put their trust in you, and' "
Abruptly, the movements subsided and as Karras watched, mesmerized, the bed drifted featherlike, slowly, to the floor and settled on the rug with a cushioned thud.
" 'Lord, grant that this' "
Numb, Karras shifted his gaze. Merrin's hand. He could not see it. It was buried under mounded, steaming vomit.
"Damien?"
Karras glanced up.
" 'Lord, hear my prayer,' " said the exorcist gently.

Slowly, Karras turned to the bed. " 'And let my cry come unto Thee.' "

Merrin lifted off the stole, took a slight step backward, and then jolted the room with the lash of his voice as he commanded, "I cast you out, unclean spirit, along with every satanic power of the enemy! every specter from hell! every savage companion!" Merrin's hand, at his side, dripped vomit to the rug. "It is Christ who commands you, who once stilled the wind and the sea and the storm! Who...'"

Regan stopped vomiting. Sat silent. Unmoving, The whites of her eyes gleamed balefully at Merrin. From the foot of the bed, Karras watched her intently as his shock and excitement began to fade, as his mind began feverishly to thresh, to poke its fingers, unbidden, compulsively, deep into corners of logical doubt: poltergeists; psychokinetic action; adolescent tensions and mind-directed force. He frowned as he remembered something. He moved to the side of the bed, leaned over, reached down to grasp Regan's wrist. And found what he'd feared. Like the shaman in Siberia, the pulse was racing at an unbelievable speed. It drained him suddenly of sun, and glancing at his watch, he counted the heartbeats, now, like arguments against his life.

" 'It is He who commands you, He who flung you headlong from the heights of heaven!' "

Merrin's powerful adjuration pounded off the rim of Karras' consciousness in resonant, inexorable blows as the pulse came faster now. And faster. Karras looked at Regan. Still silent. Unmoving. Into icy air, thin mists of vapor wafted from the vomit like a reek-ing offering. Karras felt uneasy. Then the hair on his arms began prickling up. With nightmare slowness, a fraction at a time, Regan's head was turning, swiveling like a manikin, creaking with the sound of some rusted mechanism, until the dread and glaring whites of those ghastly eyes were fixed on his.

" 'And therefore, tremble in fear, now, Satan...' "

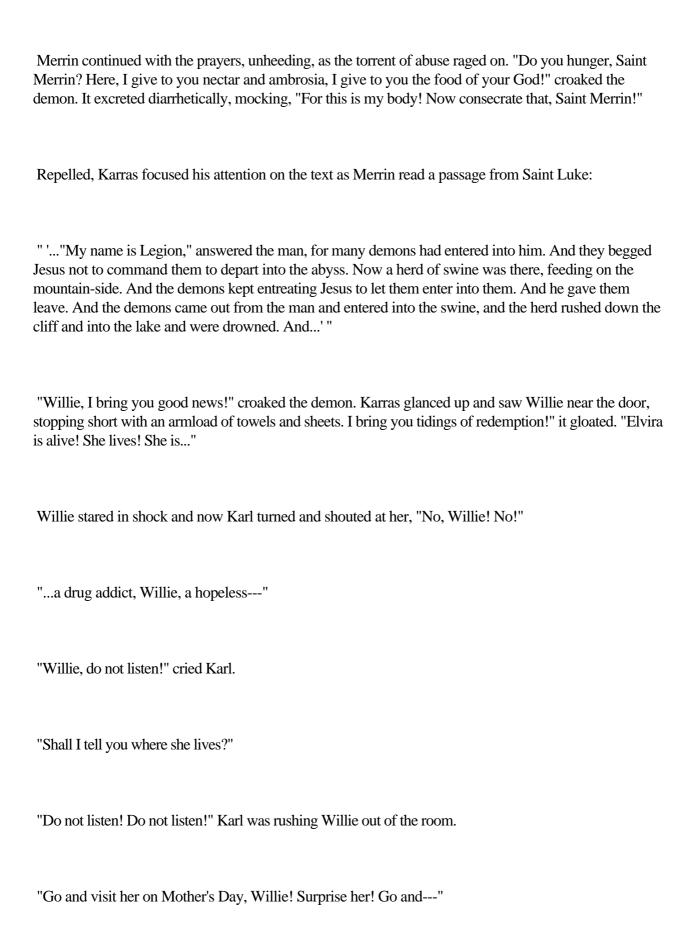
The head turned slowly back toward Merrin.

"'...you corrupter of justice! you begetter of death! you betrayer of the nations! you robber of life! you...'"

Karras glanced warily around as the lights in the room began flickering, dimming, and then faded to an

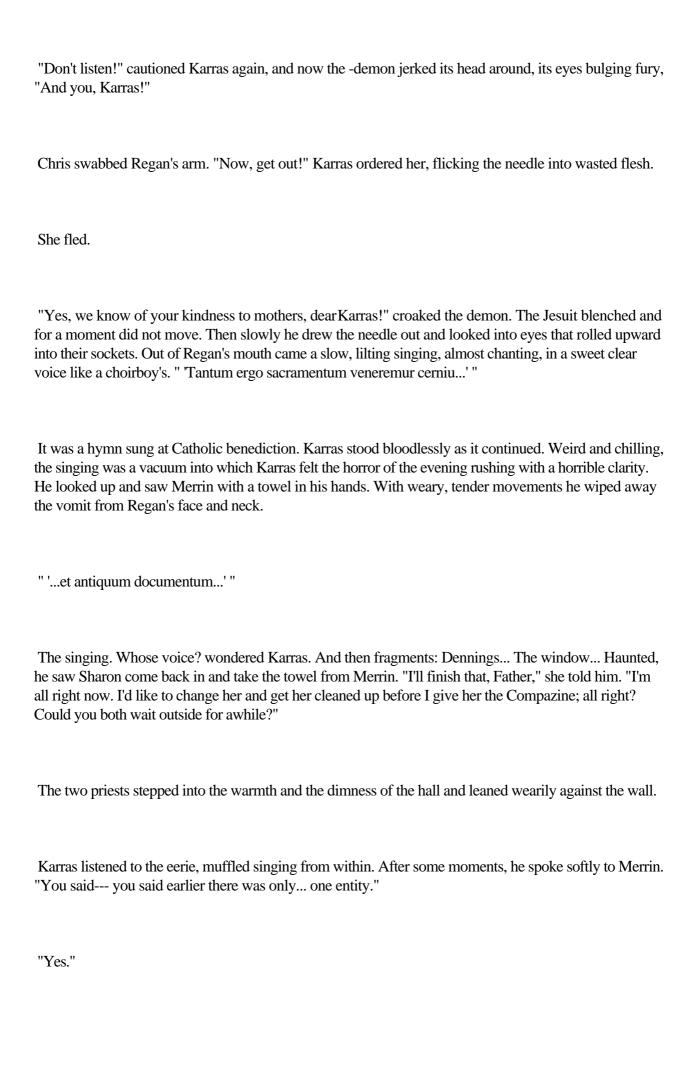
eerie, pulsing amber. He shivered. It was colder. The room was getting colder.
" 'you prince of murderers! you inventor of every obscenity! you enemy of the human ace! you' "
A muffled pounding jolted the room. Then another. Then steadily, shuddering through walls, through the floor, through the ceiling, splintering, throbbing at a ponderous rate like the beating of a heart that was massive and diseased.
"'Depart, you monster! Your place is in solitude! Your abode is in a nest of vipers! Get down and crawl with them! It is God himself who commands you! The blood of'"
The poundings grew louder, began to come ominously faster and faster.
" 'I adjure you, ancient serpent' "
And faster
" 'by the judge of the living and the dead, by your Creator, by the creator of all the universe, to' "
Sharon cried out, pressing fists against her ears as the poundings grew deafening and now suddenly accelerated and leaped to a terrifying tempo.
Regan's pulse was astonishing. It hammered at a speed too rapid to gauge. Across the bed, Merrin reached out calmly and with the end of his thumb traced the sign of the cross on Regan's vomit-covered chest. The words of his prayer were swallowed in the poundings.
Karras felt the pulse rate suddenly drop, and as Merrin prayed and traced the sign of the cross on Regan's blow, the nightmarish poundings abruptly ceased.

" 'O God of heaven and earth, God of the angels and archangels' " Karras could now hear Merrin praying as the pulse kept dropping, dropping
" 'Prideful bastard, Merrin! Scum! You win lose! She will die! The pig will die!"
The flickering haze grew gradually brighter. The demonic entity had returned and raged hatefully at Merrin. "Profligate peacock! Ancient heretic! I adjure you, turn and look on me! Now look on me, you scum!" The demon jerked forward and spat in Merrin's face, and then croaked at him, "Thus does your master cure the blind!"
" 'God and Lord of all creation' " prayed Merrin, reaching placidly for his handkerchief and wiping away the spittle.
"Now follow his teaching, Merrin! Do it! Put your sanctified cock in the piglet's mouth and cleanse it, swab it with the wrinkled relic and she will be cured, Saint Merrin! A miracle! A"
"'deliver this servant of'"
"Hypocrite! You care nothing at all for the pig. You care nothing! You have made her a contest between us!"
"'I humbly'"
"Liar! Lying bastard! Tell us, where is your humility, Merrin? In the desert? in the ruins? in the tombs where you fled to escape your fellowman? to escape from your inferiors, from the halt and the lame of mind? Do you speak to men, you pious vomit?"
"'deliver'"
"Your abode is in a nest of peacocks, Merrin! your place is within youself! Go back to the mountaintop and speak to your only equal!"





"Now the saw comes! The mother of the piglet!" mocked the demon.
Karras turned and saw Chris coming toward him with a swab and disposable syringe. She kept her head down as the demon hurled abuse, and Karras went to her, frowning.
"Sharon's changing her clothes," Chris explained, "and Karl's"
Karras cut her short with "All right," and they approached the bed.
"Ah, yes, come see your handiwork, sow-mother! Come!"
Chris tried desperately not to listen, not to look, while Karras pinned Regan's unresisting arms.
"See the puke! see the murderous bitch!" the demon raged. "Are you pleased? It is you who have done it! Yes, you with your career before anything; your career before your husband, before her, before"
Karras glanced around. Chris stood paralyzed, "Go ahead!" he ordered. "Don't listen! Go ahead!"
"your divorce! Go to priests, will you? Priest will not help!" Chris's hand began to shake, "She mad! She is mad! The piglet is mad! You have driven her to madness and to murder and"
"I can't!" Face contorted, Chris was staring at the quivering syringe. Shook her head. "I can't do it!"
Karras plucked it from her fingers. "All right, swab it! Swab the arm! Over here!" he told her firmly.
"in her coffin, you bitch, by"



The hushed tones, the lowered heads, were confessional.

"All the others are but forms of attack," continued Merrin. "There is one... only one. It is a demon." There was a silence. Then Merrin stated simply, "I know you doubt this. But you see, this demon... I have met once before. And he is powerful... powerful...."

A silence. Karras spoke again. "We say the demon... cannot touch the victim's will."

"Yes, that is so... There is no sin."

"Then what would be the purpose of possession?" Karras said, frowning. "What's the point?"

"Who can know?" answered Merrin. "Who can really hope to know?" He thought for a moment. And then probingly continued: "Yet I think the demon's target is not the possessed; it is us... the observers... every person in this house. And I think--- I think the point is to make us despair; to reject our own humanity, Damien: to see ourselves as ultimately bestial; as ultimately vile and putrescent; without dignity; ugly; unworthy. And there lies the heart of it, perhaps: in unworthiness. For I think belief in God is not a matter of reason at all; I think it finally is matter of love; of accepting the possibility that God could love us..."

Again Merrin paused. He continued more slowly and with a hush of introspection: 'He knows... the demon knows where to strike...." He was nodding. "Long ago I despaired of ever loving my neighbor. Certain people... repelled me. How could I love them? I thought. It tormented me, Damien; it led me to despair of myself... and from that, very soon, to despair of my God. My faith was shattered...."

Karras looked up at Merrin with interest. "And what happened?" he asked.

"Ah, well... at last I realized that God would never ask of me that which I know to be psychologically impossible; that the love which He asked was in my will and not meant to be felt as emotion at all. Not at all. He was asking that I act with love; that I do unto others; and that I should do it unto those who repelled me, I believe, was a greater act of love than any other." He shook his head. "I know that all of this must seem very obvious, Damien. I know. But at the time I could not see It. Strange blindness. How many husbands and wives," he uttered sadly, "must believe they have fallen out of love because their hearts no longer race at the sight of their beloveds! Ah, dear God!" He shook his head; and then nodded. "There it lies, I think, Damien... possession; not in wars, as some tend to believe; not so much; and very

seldom in extraordinary interventions such as here... this girl... this poor child. No, I see it most often in the little things, Damien: in the senseless, petty spites; the misunderstandings; the cruel and cutting word that leaps unbidden to the tongue between friends. Between lovers. Enough of these," Merrin whispered, "and we have no need of Satan to manage our wars; these we manage for ourselves...."

The lilting singing could still be heard in the bedroom. Merrin looked up at the door and listened for a moment. "And yet even from this--- from evil--- will come good. In some way. In some way that we may never understand or ever see." Merrin paused. "Perhaps evil is the crucible of goodness," he brooded. "And perhaps even Satan--- Satan, in spite of himself--- somehow serves to work out the will of God."

He said no more, and for a time they stood in silence while Karras reflected. Another objection came to mind. "Once the demon's driven out," he probed, "what's to keep it from coming back in?"

"I don't know," Merrin answered. "I don't know. And yet it never seems to happen. Never." Merrin put a hand to his face, tightly pinching at the corners of his eyes. "Damien... what a wonderful name," he murmured. Karras heard exhaustion in the voice. And something else. Some anxiety. Something like repression of pain.

Abruptly, Merrin pushed himself away from the wall, and with his face still hidden in his hand; he excused himself and hurried down the hall to the bathroom. What was wrong? wondered Karras. He felt a sudden envy and admiration for the exorcist's strong and simple faith. He turned toward the door. The singing. It had stopped. Had the night at last ended?

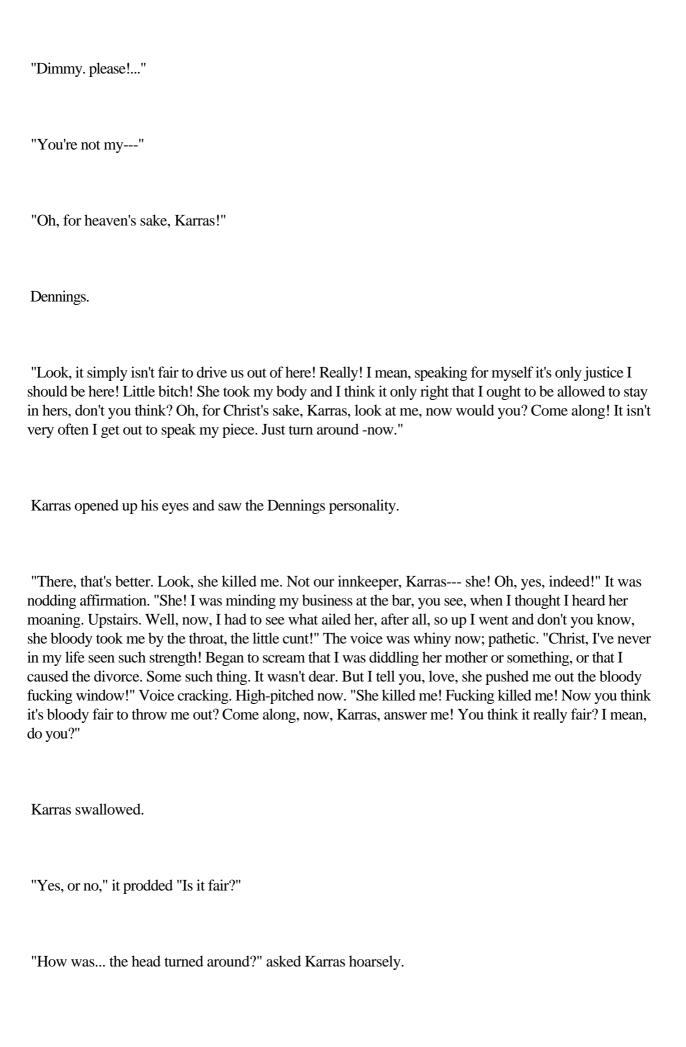
Some minutes later, Sharon came out of the bedroom with a foul-smelling bundle of bedding and clothing. "She's sleeping now," she said. She looked away quickly and moved off down the hall.

Karras took a deep breath and returned to the bedroom. Felt the cold. Smelled the stench. He walked slowly to the bedside. Regan. Asleep. At last. And at last, thought Karras, he could rest.

He reached down and gripped Regan's thin wrist, looking at the sweep-second hand of his watch.

"Why you do this to me, Dimmy?"





Dennings shifted his gaze around evasively. "Oh, well, that was an accident a freak I hit the steps, you know It was freaky."
Karras pondered, a dryness in his throat. Then he picked up Regan's wrist again; And glanced at his watch in a move of dismissal.
"Dimmy, Please! Don' make me be alone!"
His mother.
"If instead of be priest, you was doctor, I Live in nice house, Dimmy, not wit' da cockroach, not all by myself in da apartlnent! Then"
He was straining to block it all out, but the voice began to weep again.
"Dimmy, please!"
"You're not my"
"Won't you face the truth, stinking scum?" It was the demon. "You believe what Merrin tells you?" It seethed. "You believe him to be holy and good? Well, he is not! He is proud and unworthy! I will prove it to you, Karrasl I will prove it by killing the piglet!"
Karras opened up his eyes. But still dared not look.
"Yes, she will die and Merrin's God will not save her, Karras! You will not save her! She will die from Merrin's pride and your incompetence! Bungler! You should not have given her the Librium!"

Karras turned now and looked at the eyes. They were shining with triumph and piercing spite.
"Feel her pulse!" The demon grinned "Go ahead, Karras! Feel it!"
Regan's wrist was still gripped in his hand, and now he frowned worriedly. The pulse beat was rapid and
"Feeble?" croaked the demon. "Ah, yes. A trifle. For the moment, just a bit."
Karras fetched his medical bag and took out his stethoscope. The demon rasped, "Listen, Karras! Listen well!"
Karras listened. The heart tones sounded distant and inefficient.
"I will not let her sleep!"
Karras flicked up his glance to the demon. Felt chilled.
"Yes, Karras!" it croaked. "She will not sleep! Do you hear? I will not let the piglet sleep!"
As Karras stared numbly, the demon put its head back in gloating laughter. He did not hear Merrin come back into the room.
The exorcist stood by him at the side of the bed and studied his face. "What is it?" he asked.
Karras answered dully, "The demon said he wouldn't let her sleep." He turned haunted eyes on Merrin. "Her heart's begun to work inefficiently, Father. If she doesn't get rest pretty soon, she'll die of cardiac exhaustion."

Merrin looked grave. "Can you give her drugs? Some medicine to make her sleep?"

Karras shook his head. "No, that's dangerous. She might go into coma." He turned as Regan clucked like a hen. "If her blood pressure drops any more..." He trailed off.

"What can be done?" Merrin asked.

"Nothing... nothing..." Karras answered. "But I don't know--- maybe new advances---" He said abruptly to Merrin, "I'm going to call in a cardiac specialist, Father."

Merrin nodded.

Karras went downstairs. He found Chris keeping vigil in the kitchen and from the room off the Pantry he heard Willie sobbing, heard the sound of Karras consoling voice. He explained the need for consultation, carefully not divulging the full extent of Regan's danger. Chris gave him permission, and Karras telephoned a friend, a noted specialist at the Georgetown University Medical School, awakening him and briefing him tersely.

"Be right there," said the specialist.

He was at the house in less than half an hour. In the bedroom he reacted with bewilderment to the cold and the stench and with horror and compassion to Regan's condition. She was now croaking gibberish. While the specialist examined her, she alternately sang and made animal noises. Then Dennings appearied.

"Oh, it's terrible," it whined at the specialist. "Just awful! Oh, I do hope there's something you can do! Is there something? We'll have no place to go, you see, otherwise, and all because... Oh, damn the stubborn devil!" As the specialist stared oddly while taking Regan's blood pressure, Dennings looked to Karras and complained, "What the hell are you doing! Can't you see the little bitch should be in hospital? She belongs in a madhouse, Karras! Now you know that! Really! Now let's stop all this cunting mumbo-jumbo! If she dies, you know, it's your fault! All yours! I mean, just because he's stubborn doesn't mean you should behave like a snot! You're a doctor! You should know better, Karras! Now come along; there's just a terrible shortage of housing these days. If we're---"

Back came the demon now, howling like a wolf. The specialist, expressionless, undid the sphygmomanometer wrapping. Then he nodded at Karras. He was finished.
They went out into the hall, where the specialist looked back at the bedroom door for a moment, and then turned to Karras. "What the hell's going on in there, Father?"
The Jesuit averted his face. "I can't say," he said softly.
"Okay."
"What's the story?"
The specialist's manner was somber. "She's got to stop that activity sleep go to sleep before the blood pressure drops"
"Is there anything I can do, Bill?"
The specialist looked directly at Karras and said, "Pray."
He said good night and walked away. Karras watched him, every artery and nerve begging rest, begging hope, begging miracles though he knew none could be. "You should not have given her the Librium!"
He turned back to the room and pushed open the door with a hand that was heavy as his soul.
Merrin stood by the bedside, watching while Regan neighed shrilly like a horse. He heard Karras enter -and looked at him inquiringly. Karras shook his head. Merrin nodded. There was sadness in his face; then acceptance; and as he turned back to Regan, there was grim resolve.

Merrin knelt by the bed. "Our Father" he began.
Regan splattered him with dark and stinking bile, and then croaked, "You will lose! She will die!She will die!"
Karras picked up his copy of the Ritual. Opened it. Looked up and stared at Regan.
" 'Save your servant,' " prayed Merrin.
" 'In the face of the enemy.' "
In Karras' heart there was a desperate torment. Go to sleep! Go to sleep! roared his will in a frenzy.
But Regan did not sleep.
Not by dawn.
Not by noon.
Not by nightfall.

Not by Sunday, when the pulse rate was one hundred and forty, and ever threadier, while the fits continued unremittingly, while Karras and Merrin kept repeating the ritual, never sleeping, Karras feverishly groping for remedies: a restraining sheet to hold Regan's movements to a minimum; keeping everyone out of the bedroom for a time to see if lack of provocation might terminate the fits. It did not. And Regan's shouting was as draining as her movements. Yet the blood pressure held. But how much longer? Karras agonized. Ah, God, don't let her die! he cried repeatedly to himself. Don't let her die! Let her sleep! Let her sleep! Never was he conscious that his thoughts were prayers; only that the prayers were never answered.

At seven o'clock that Sunday evening, Karras sat mutely next to Merrin in the bedroom, exhausted and racked by the demonic attacks: his lack of faith; his incompetence; his flight from his mother in search of status. And Regan. His fault. "You should not have given her the Librium..."

The priests had just finished a cycle of the ritual. They were resting, listening to Regan singing "Panis Angelicus." They rarely left the room, Karras once to change clothes and to shower. But in the cold it was easier to stay wakeful; in the stench that since morning had altered in character to the gorge-raising odor of decayed, rotted flesh.

Staring feverishly at Regan with red-veined eyes, Karras thought he heard a sound. Something creaked. Again: As he blinked. And then he realized it was coming from his own crusted eyelids. He turned toward Merrin. Through the hours, the exorcist had said very little: now and then a homely story of his boyhood; reminiscences; little things; a story about a duck he owned named Clancy. Karras worried about him. The lack of sleep. The demon's attacks. At his age. Merrin closed his eyes and let his chin rest on his chest. Karras glanced around at Regan, and then wearily stood up and moved over to the bed. He checked her pulse and then began to take a blood pressure reading. As he wrapped the black sphygmomanometer cloth around the arm, he blinked repeatedly to clear the blurring of his vision.

"Today Muddir Day, Dimmy."

For a moment; he could not move; felt his heart wrenched from his chest. Then he looked into those eyes that seemed not Regan's anymore, but eyes sadly rebuking. His mother's.

"I not good to you? Why you leave me to die all alone, Dimmy? Why? Why you..."

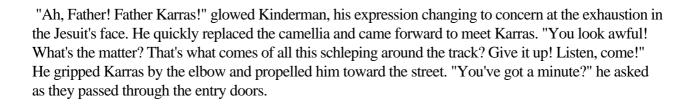
"Damien!"

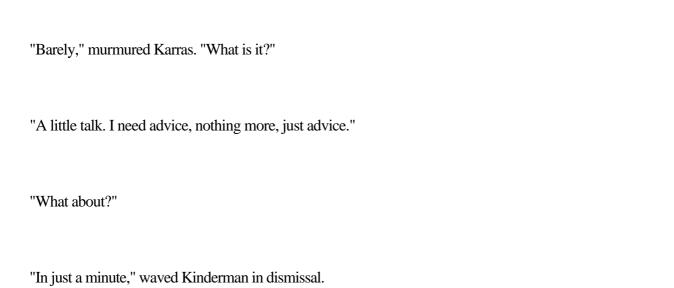
Merrin clutching tightly at his arm. "Please go and rest for a little now, Damien."

"Dimmy, please! Why you..."









"Now we'll walk. We'll take air. We'll enjoy." He linked his arm through the Jesuit's and guided him diagonally across Prospect Street. "Ah, now, look at that! Beautiful! Gorgeous!" He was pointing to the sun sinking low on the Potomac, and in the stillness rang the laughter and the talking-all-together of Georgetown undergraduates in front of a drinking hall near the corner of Thirty-sixth Street. One punched another one hard on the arm, and the two began wrestling amicably. "Ah, college, college..." breathed Kinderman ruefully, nodding as he stared. "I never went... but I wish... I wish..." He saw that Karras was watching the sunset. "I mean, seriously, you really look bad," he repeated. "What's the matter? You've been sick?"

When would Kinderman come to the point? Karras wondered. "No, just busy," he answered.

"Slow it down, then," wheezed Kinderman. "Slow. You know better. You saw the Bolshoi Ballet, incidentally, at the Watergate?"

"No."



The detective looked up at him, blankly incredulous. "A condition like mine and I would smoke?"
"No, you wouldn't," murmured Karras, clasping hands atop the wall and staring at them. Stop shaking!
"Some doctor! God forbid I should be sick in some jungle and instead of Albert Schweitzer, there is with me only you! You cure warts still with frogs, Doctor Karras?"
"It's toads," Karras answered, subdued.
"You're not laughing today," worried Kinderman. "Something's wrong?"
Mutely Karras shook his head. Then, "Go ahead," he said softty.
The detective sighed and faced out to the river. "I was saying" he wheezed. He scratched his brow with his thumbnail. "I was saying well, lets say I'm working on a case, Father Karras. A homicide."
"Dennings?"
"No, no, purely hypothetical. You wouldn't be familiar with it. Nothing. Not at all."
Karras nodded.
"Like a ritual witchcraft murder, this looks," the detective continued broodingly. He was frowning, picking words slowly. "And let us say in this house

beyond them. "Yes, I know: sounds fantastic... ridiculous... but true. Now there comes to this house, Father, a priest--- very famous--- and this case being purely hypothetical, Father, I learn through my also hypothetical genius that this priest has once cured a very special type illness. An illness which is mental, by the way, a fact I mention just in passing for your interest."

Karras felt himself turning grayer by the moment.

"Now also there is... satanism involved in this illness, it happens, plus... strength... yes, incredible strength. And this... hypothetical girl, let us say, then, could... twist a man's head around, you see. Yes, she could." He was nodding now. "Yes... yes, she could. Now the question..." He grimaced thoughtfully. "You see... you see, the girl is not responsible, Father. She's demented." He shrugged. "And just a child! A child!" He shook his head. "And yet the illness that she has... it could be dangerous. She could kill someone else. Who's to know?" He again squinted out across the river. "It's a problem. What to do? Hypothetically, I mean. Forget it? Forget it and hope she gets"--- Kinderman paused--- "gets well?" He reached for a handkerchief. "Father, I don't know... I don't know." He blew his nose. "It's a terrible decision; just awful." He was searching for a clean, unused section of handkerchief. "Awful. And I hate to be the one who has to make it." He again blew his nose and lightly dabbed at a nostril. "Father, what would be right in such a case? Hypothetically? What do you believe would be the right thing to do?"

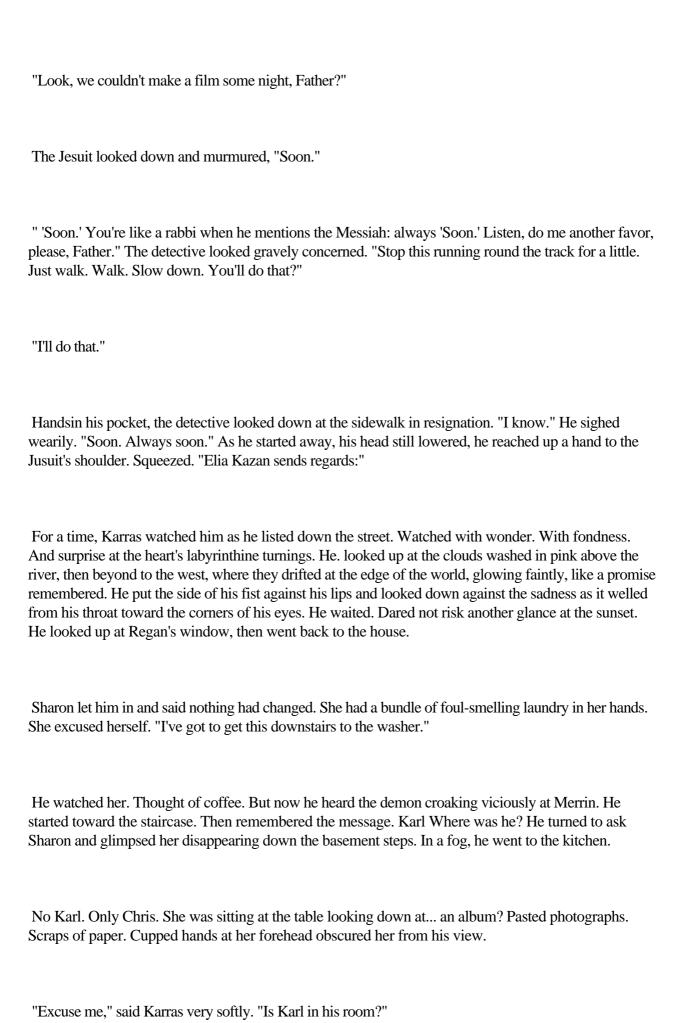
For an instant, the Jesuit throbbed with rebellion, with a dull, weary anger at the piling on of weight. He let it ebb. He met Kinderman's eyes and answered softly, "I would put it in the hands of a higher authority."

"I believe it is there at this moment," breathed Kinderman.

"Yes... and I would leave it there."

Their gazes locked. Then Kinderman pocketed the handkerchief. "Yes... yes, I thought you would say that." He nodded, then glanced at the sunset. "So beautiful. A sight" He tugged back his sleeve for a look at his wrist watch. "Ah, well, I have to go. Mrs. K will be schreiing now: 'The dinner, it's cold!' "He turned back to Karras. "Thank you, Father. I feel better... much better. Oh, incidentally, you could maybe do a favor? Give a message? If you meet a man named Engstrom, tell him--- well, say, 'Elvira is in a clinic, she's all right.' He'll understand. Would you do that? I mean, if you should meet him."

Karras was puzzled. Then, "Sure," he said. "Sure."



She shook her head. "He's on an errand," she whispered huskily. Karras heard her sniffle. Then, "There's coffee there, Father," Chris murmured. "It ought to perc in just a minute."

As Karras glanced over at the percolator light, he heard Chris getting up from the table, and when he turned he saw her moving quickly past him with her face averted. He heard a quavery "Excuse me." She left the kitchen.

His gaze shifted to the album. He walked over and looked down. Candid photos. A young girl. With a pang, Karras realized he was looking at Regan: here, blowing out candles on a whipped-creamy birthday cake; here, sitting on a lakefront dock in shorts and a T-shirt, waving gaily at the camera. Something was stenciled on the front of the T-shirt. CAMP... He could not make it out.

On the opposite page a ruled sheet of paper bore the script of a child:

If instead of just clay

I could take all the prettiest things

Like a rainbow,

Or clouds or the way a bird sings,

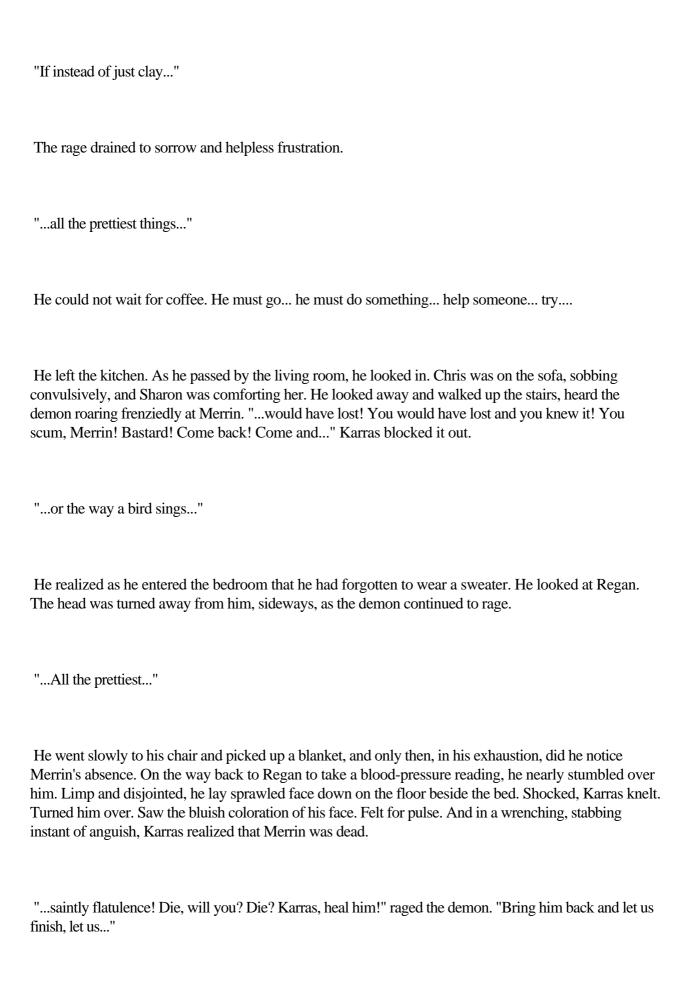
Maybe then, Mother dearest,

If I put them all together,

I could really make a sculpture of you.

Below the poem: I LOVE YOU! HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY! The signature, in pencil, was Rags.

Karras shut his eyes. He could not bear his chance meeting. He turned away wearily and waited for the coffee to brew. With lowered head, he gripped the counter and again closed his eyes, Shut it out! he thought; shut it all out! But he could not, and as he listened to the thump of the percolating coffee, his hands began to tremble and compassion swelled suddenly and blindly into rage at disease and at pain, at the suffering of children and the frailty of the body, at the monstrous and outrageous corruption of death.



Heart failure. Coronary artery. "Ah, God!" Karras groaned in a whisper. "God, no!" He shut his eyes and shook his head in disbelief, in despair, and then, abruptly, with a surge of grief, he dug his thumb with savage force into Merrin's pale wrist as if to squeeze from its sinews the lost beat of life.
"pious"
Karras sagged back and took a deep breath. Then he saw the tiny pills scattered loose on the floor. He picked one up and with aching recognition saw that Merrin had known. Nitroglycerin. He'd known. His eyes red and brimming, Karras looked at Merrin's face. "go and rest for a little now, Damien."
"Even worms will not eat your corruption, you"
Karras heard the words of the demon and began to tremble with a murderous fury.
Don't listen!
"homosexual"
Don't listen! Don't listen!
A vein stood out angrily on Karras' forehead, throbbing darkly. As he picked up Merrin's hands and

A vein stood out angrily on Karras' forehead, throbbing darkly. As he picked up Merrin's hands and started tenderly to place them in the form of a cross, he heard the demon croak, "Now put his cock in his hands!" and a glob of putrid spittle hit the dead man's eye. "The last rites!" mocked the demon. It put back its head and laughed wildly.

Karras stared numbly at the spittle, eyes bulging. Did not move. Could not hear above the roaring of his blood. And then slowly, in quivering, side-angling jerks, he looked up with a face that was a purpling snarl, an electrifying spasm of hatred and rage. "You son of a bitch!" Karras seethed in a whisper that hissed into air like molten steel. "You bastard!" Though he did not move, he seemed to be uncoiling, the sinews of his neck pulling taut like cables. The demon stopped laughing and eyed him with malevolence. "You were losing! You're a loser! You've always been a loser!" Regan splattered him with vomit. He ignored it. "Yes, you're very good with children!" he said, trembling. "Little girls! Well, come on! Let's see you try something bigger! Come on!" He had his hands out like great, fleshy hooks, beckoning

slowly. "Come on! Come on, loser! Try me! Leave the girl and take me! Take me! Come into..." It was barely a minute later where Chris and Sharon heard the sounds from above. They were in the study and, dry-eyed, Chris sat in front of the bar while Sharon, behind it, was mixing them a drink. As she set the vodka and tonic on the bar, both the women glanced up at the ceiling. Stumblings. Sharp bumps against furniture. Walls. Then the voice of ...the demon? The demon. Obscenities. But another voice. Alternating. Karras? Yes, Karras. Yet stronger. Deeper. "No! I won't let you hurt them! You're not going to hurt them! You're coming with..." Chris knocked her drink over as she flinched at a violent splintering, at the breaking of glass, and in an instant she and Sharon were racing from the study, up the stairs, to the door of Regan's bedroom, bursting in. They saw the shutters of the window on the floor, ripped off their hinges! And the window! The glass had been totally shattered! Alarmed, they rushed forward toward the window, and as they did, Chris saw Merrin on the floor by the bed. She stood rooted in shock. Then she ran to him. Knelt. She gasped. "Oh, my God!" she whimpered "Sharon! Shar, come here! Quick, come---" Sharon screamed from the window, and as Chris looked up bloodlessly, gaping, she ran again toward the door. "Shar, what is it?" "Father Karras! Father Karras!" She bolted from the room in hysteria, and Chris got up and ran trembling to the window. She looked

below and felt her heart dropping out of her body. At the bottom of the steps on busy M Street, Karras

She stared horrified. Paralyzed. Tried to move.

lay crumpled amid a gathering crowd.

"Mother?"
A small, wan voice calling tearfully behind her. Chris gulped. Did not dare to believe or "What's happening, Mother? Oh, please! Please come here! Mother, please! I'm afraid! I'm a"
Chris turned quickly and saw the tears of confusion, the pleading; and suddenly she was racing to the bed, weeping, "Rags! Oh, my baby, my baby! Oh, Rags!"
Downstairs, Sharon lunged from the house and ran frantically to the Jesuit residence hall. She asked urgently for Dyer. He came quickly to Reception. She told him. He turned pale.
"Called an ambulance?"
"Oh, my God, I didn't think!"
Swiftly Dyer gave instructions to the switchboard operator, then he raced from the hall, followed closely by Sharon. Crossed the street. Down the steps.
"Let me through, please! Coming through!" As he pushed through the bystanders, Dyer heard murmurs of the litany of indifference. "What happened?" "Some guy fell down the steps." "Did you?" "Musta

been drunk: See the vomit?" "Come on, we'll be late for the..."

Dyer at last broke through, and for a heart-stop-ping instant felt frozen in a timeless dimension of grief, in a space where the air was too painful to breathe. Karras lay crumpled and twisted, on his back; with his head in the center of a growing pool of blood. He was staring vacantly, jaw slack. And now his eyes shifted numbly to Dyer. Leaped alive. Seemed to glow with an elation. Some plea. Something urgent.

"Come on, back now! Move it back!" A policeman. Dyer knelt and put a light, tender hand like a caress against the bruised, gashed face. So many cuts. A bloody ribbon trickled down from the mouth. "Damien..." Dyer paused to still the quaver in his throat, and in the eyes saw that faint, eager shine, the warm plea.

He leaned closer. "Can you talk?"
Slowly Karras reached his hand to Dyer's wrist. Staring fixedly, he clutched it. Briefly squeezed.
Dyer fought back the tears. He leaned closer and put his mouth next to Karras' ear. "Do you want to make your confession now, Damien?"
A squeeze.
"Are you sorry for all of the sins of your life and for having offended Almighty God?"
A squeeze.
Now Dyer leaned back and as he slowly traced the sign of the cross over Karras, he recited the words of absolution: "Ego te absolvo"
An enormous tear rolled down from a corner of Karras' eye, and now Dyer felt his wrist being squeezed even harder, continuously, as he finished the absolution: "in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen."
Dyer leaned over again with his mouth next to Karras' ear. Waited. Forced the swelling from his throat. And then murmured, "Are you?" He stopped short as the pressure on his wrist abruptly slackened. He pulled back his head and saw the eyes filled with peace; and with something else: something mysteriously like joy at the end of heart's longing. The eyes were still staring. But at nothing in this world. Nothing here.
Slowly and tenderly, Dyer slid the eyelids down. He heard the ambulance wail from afar. He began to say, "Good-bye," but could not finish. He lowered his head and wept.

The ambulance arrived. They put Karras an a stretcher, and as they were loading him aboard, Dyer climbed in and sat beside the intern. He reached over and took Karras' hand.
"There's nothing you can do for him now, Father," said the intern in a kindly voice. "Don't make it harder on yourself. Don't come."
Dyer held his gaze on that chipped, torn face. He shook his head.
The intern looked up to the ambulance rear door, where the driver was waiting patiently. He nodded. The ambulance door went up with a click.
From the sidewalk, Sharon watched stunned as the ambulance slowly drove away. She heard murmurs from the bystanders.
"What happened?"
"Who knows, buddy? Who the hell knows?"
The wail of the ambulance siren lifted shrill into night above the river until the driver remembered that time no longer mattered. He cut it off. The river flowed quiet again, reaching toward a gentler shore.
(End of part four * Scanned and fully proofed by nihua)
EPILOGUE

Late June sunlight streamed through the window of Chris's bedroom. She folded a blouse on top of the contents of the suitcase and closed the lid. She moved quickly toward the door. "Okay, that's all of it," she said to Karl, and as the Swiss came forward to lock the suitcase, she went out into the hall and toward Regan's bedroom. "Hey, Rags, how ya comin'?"

It was now six weeks since the deaths of the priests. Since the shock. Since the closed investigation by Kinderman. And still there were no answers. Only haunting speculation and frequent awakenings from sleep in tears. The death of Merrin had been caused by coronary artery disease. But as for Karras... "Baffling," Kinderman had wheezed. Not the girl, he'd decided. She'd been firmly secured by restraining straps and sheet. Obviously, Karras had ripped away the shutters, leaping through the window to deliberate death. But why? Fear? An attempt to escape something horrible? No. Kinderman had quickly ruled it out. Had he wished to escape, he could have gone out the door. Nor was Karras in any case a man who would run.

But then why the fatal leap?

For Kinderinan, the answer began to take shape in a statement by Dyer making mention of Karras' emotional conflicts: his guilt about his mother; her death; his problem of faith; and when Kinderman added to these the continuous lack of sleep for several days; the concern and the guilt over Regan's imminent death; the demonic attacks in the form of his mother; and finally, the shock of Merrin's death, he sadly concluded that Karras' mind had snapped, had been-shattered by the burden of guilts he could no longer endure. Moreover, in investigating Dennings' death, the detective had learned from his readings on possession that exorcists frequently became possessed, and through just such causes as might here have been present: strong feelings of guilt and the need to be punished, added to the power of autosuggestion. Karras had been ripe. And the sounds of struggle, the priest's altered voice heard by both Chris and Sharon, these seemed to lend weight to the detective's hypothesis.

But Dyer had refused to accept it. Again and again he returned to the house during Regan's convalescence to talk to Chris. He asked over and over again if Regan was now able to recall what had happened in the bedroom that night. But the answer was always a headshake; or a no; and finally the case was closed.

Now Chris poked her head into Regan's bedroom; saw her daughter with two stuffed animals in her clutch, staring down with a child's discontent at the packed, open suitcase on her bed. "How are you coming with your packing, honey?" Chris asked her.

Regan looked up. A little wan. A little gaunt. A little dark beneath the eyes. "There's not enough room in this thing!" She frowned.



Still downcast, the Jesuit nodded. Chris glanced to her breakfast plate. Too nervous and excited, she hadn't eaten. The rose was still there. She picked it up and pensively twisted it, rolling it back and forth

by the stem. "And he never even knew her," she murmured absently. Then she held the rose still and flicked her eyes at Dyer. Saw him staring. "What do you think really happened?" he asked softly. "As a nonbeliever. Do you thinly she was really possessed?"

She pondered, looking down, still toying with the rose. "Well, like you say... as far as God goes, I am a nonbeliever. Still am. But when it comes to a devil--- well, that's something else. I could buy that. I do, in fact. I do. And it isn't just what happened to Rags. I mean, generally." She shrugged. "You come to God and you have to figure if there is one, then he must need a million years' sleep every night or else he tends to get irritable. Know what I mean? He never talks. But the devil keeps advertising, Father. The devil does lots of commercials."

For a moment Dyer looked at her, and then said quietly, "But if all of the evil in the world makes you think that there might be a devil, then how do you account for all the good in the world?"

The thought made her squint as she held his gaze. Then she dropped her eyes. "Yeah... yeah," she murmured softly. "That's a point." The sadness and shock of Karras' death settles down on her mood like a melancholy haze. Yet through it, she saw a speckled point of light, and tried to focus on it, remembering Dyer as he had walked her to her car at the cemetery after Karras' funeral. "Can you come to the house for a while?" she'd asked him. "Oh, I'd like to, but I can't miss the feast," he replied. She looked puzzled. "When a Jesuit dies," he explained to her, "we always have a feast. For him it's a beginning, so we celebrate."

Chris had another thought. "You said Father Karras had a problem with his faith."

Dyer nodded.

"I can't believe that," she said. "I've never seen such faith in my life."

"Taxi here, madam."-

Chris came out of her reverie. "Thanks, Karl. Okay." She and Dyer stood up. "No, you stay, Father. I'll be right down. I'm just going upstairs get Rags."

He nodded absently and watched her leave. He was thinking of Karras' puzzling last words, the shouts overheard from below before his death. There was something there. What was it? He didn't know. Both Chris's and Sharon's recollections had been vague. But now he thought once again of that mysterious look of joy in Karras' eyes. And something else, suddenly remembered: a deep and fiercely shining glint of ...triumph? He wasn't sure, yet oddly he felt lighter. Why lighter? he wondered.

He walked to the entry hall. Hands in his pockets, he leaned against the doorway and watched as Karl helped stow luggage in the cab. It was humid and hot and he wiped his brow, then turned at the sound of footsteps coming down the staircase. Chris and Regan, hand in hand. They came toward him. Chris kissed his cheek. Then she held her hand to it, probing his eyes tenderly.

"It's all right," he said. Then he shrugged. "I've got a feeling it's all right."

She nodded. "I'll call you from L.A. Take care."

Dyer glanced down at Regan. She was frowning at him, as at a sudden remembrance of forgotten concern. Impulsively, she reached up her arms to him. He leaned over and she kissed him. Then she stood for a moment, still staring at him oddly. No, not at him: at his round Roman collar.

Chris looked away. "Come on," she said huskily, taking Regan's hand. "We'll be late, hon. Come on."

Dyer watched as they moved away. Returned Chris's wave. Saw her blow a kiss, then pile quickly after Regan into the cab. And as Karl climbed in front beside the driver, Chris waved again through the window. The taxi pulled away. Dyer walked over to the curb. Watched. Soon the cab turned a corner and was gone.

From across the street, he heard a squeal of brakes. He looked. A police car. Kinderman emerging. The detective moved slowly around the car and waddled toward Dyer. He waved. "I came to say good-bye."

"You just missed them."

Kinderman stopped in his tracks, crestfallen, "They're gone?"



"You know, you look a little bit like Bogart."
"You noticed."
In forgetting, they were trying to remember.
The End:
THE EXORCIST
©1971 William Peter Blatty
(Scanned and fully proofed by nihua, 2002-05-04)
Next:
LEGION
ISBN 0-671-47045-0
©1983 William Peter Blatty
sequel to The Exorcist.
(Coming soon)

the sidewalk, hooked an arm through Dyer's and slowly started walking him down the street. "I'm reminded of a line in the film Casablanca," he said fondly. "At the end Humphrey Bogart says to Claude

Rains: 'Louie--- I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship.' "