

# THE PARADOXES OF THE HIGHEST SCIENCE: MAGIC AND OCCULTIISM

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And a while after that hopeful sign, his eyelids fluttered, opened..After the service, among those who came to Agnes at graveside, trying to express the inexpressible, was Paul Damascus, the owner of Damascus Pharmacy on Ocean Avenue. Of Mideastern extraction, he had dark olive skin and, incredibly, rust--red hair. With his rust-red eyebrows, lashes, and mustache, his handsome face looked like that of a bronze statue with a curious patina.. "Miss White was admitted to St. Mary's late January fifth," said Nolly, "with dangerous hypertension, a complication of pregnancy."..He wanted to say: The vain, power-mad politicians who milk cheers from ignorant crowds, the sports stars and preening actors who hear themselves called heroes and never object, they should all wither with shame at the mention of your name. Your vision, your struggle, the years of grueling work, your enduring faith when others doubted, the risk you took with career and reputation--it's one of the great stories of science, and I'd be honored if I could shake your hand..altogether by taking slow deep breaths, slow deep breaths, and by remembering that each of us has a right to be happy, to be fulfilled, to be free of fear..If the aftermath of his encounter with Vanadium had not been so messy, Junior might have paused for dinner before wrapping up his work here. The walk back from Quarry Lake had taken almost two hours, in part because he had ducked out of sight in the trees and brush each time that he heard traffic approaching. He was famished. Regardless of how well-prepared the food, however, ambience was a significant factor in the enjoyment of any meal, and bloodstained decor was not, in his view, conducive to fine dining..The receptionist, Rebecca, had stayed late, just to keep company with Barty in the waiting room. As she settled into a chair beside the boy, he asked her if she knew what gravity was on Mars, and when she confessed ignorance, he said, "Only thirty-seven percent what it is here. You can really jump on Mars."..Perhaps he would not have leaped along this chain of conclusions if he'd not been an admirer of Caesar Zedd, for Zedd teaches that too often society encourages us to dismiss certain insights as illogical, even when in fact these insights arise from animal instinct and are the closest thing to unalloyed truth we will ever know.. "With this money, you won't have to cut back on the number of pies you give away--and all of that."..Leaving the engine running and the heater on, he got out of the car, leaned back inside, said, "Better lock up while I'm gone," and then closed his door..He'd once spoken that very sentiment to her. Golden haze, sun in the heart. His words had melted her, tears had sprung into her eyes, and sex been better than ever..They could not have been more solemn or more respectful if Naomi's corpse--stitched back together, pumped full of embalming fluid, painted with pancake makeup, dressed in white, with her cold hands clasping a Bible to her breast--had been reposing in a casket in this very room, surrounded by flowers and awaiting the arrival of mourners. They were all polite, soft-spoken, sad-eyed, oozing unctuous concern--and so full of feverish calculation that Junior wouldn't have been surprised if they had set off the ceiling-mounted fire sprinklers..The mound of earth beside the grave had been disguised by piles of flowers and cut ferns. The suspended casket was skirted with black material to conceal the yawning grave beneath it..Her case of polio had been so severe that braces and crutches were never an option. Muscle rehabilitation had been ineffective..Celestina jammed the shaft of the crank into the casing socket. Wouldn't fit. Her hands were shaking. Steel fins on the shaft of the crank had to be lined up just-so with slots in the socket. She fumbled, fumbled..She worried that her anxiety would prove contagious, that when her fear infected her boy, he would be less able to fight whatever hateful thing had taken seed in his right eye..Had he ever thought he could get away with this? He must have been delusional, temporarily mad..Not that he failed to perform well. As always, he was a bull, a stallion, an insatiable satyr. None of his lovers complained; none had the energy for complaint when he'd finished with them.. "Me too." He closed the ring box. Took a deep breath. Opened the box again. "Celestina, when I met you, my heart was beating but it was dead. It was cold inside me. I thought it would never be warm again, but because of you, it is. You have given my life back to me, and I want now to give my life to you. Will you marry me?"..Maria said nothing, working busily, but Agnes recognized that special silence in which difficult words were sought and laboriously stitched together..Agnes had struggled recently to find a way to explain to Barty that his uncles had lost their hope, to convey also what it meant to live without hope--and somehow to tell the boy all this without burdening him, at such a young age, with the details of what his monstrous grandfather, Agnes's father, had done to her and to her brothers. The task was beyond her abilities. The fact that Barty was a prodigy six times over didn't make his mother's work easier, because in order to understand her, he would require experience and emotional maturity, not just intellect..Lord, help me here. Give me this one, just this one, and I'll follow thereafter where I'm led. I'll always thereafter be your instrument, but please, please, GIVE ME THIS CRAZY EVIL SON OF A BITCH!..He was Father Tom again, having recommitted to his vows three years previous. At his request, the Church had assigned him as the chaplain of Pie Lady Services..Junior was glad for the chance to eavesdrop, not only because he hoped to learn the nature and depth of Vanadium's suspicions, but also because he was curious--and concerned--about the cause of the disgusting and embarrassing episode that had landed him here.. "That's right," Celestina told Wally. "This isn't wagering. What's wrong with you?"..Because he kept imagining the stealthy sounds of a dead cop rising in vengeance behind him, Junior switched on the radio. He tuned in a station featuring a Top 40 countdown..His severed toe lay across the room, on the white tile floor. It stuck up stiffly, nail gleaming, as if the floor were snow and the toe were the only exposed extremity of a body buried in a drift..Then he looked up at the massive limbs overhead, and the mood changed: A sense of impending insight at once gave way to the fear that an unsuspected fissure in a huge limb might crack through at this precise moment, crushing him under a ton of wood, or that the Big One, striking now, would topple the entire oak..The sidewalks were crowded with businessmen in suits, hippies in flamboyant garb, groups of smartly attired suburban ladies in town to shop, and the usual forgettably dressed rabble, some smiling and some surly and some mumbling but as blank-eyed as mannequins, who might be hired assassins or poets, for all he knew, eccentric millionaires in mufti or carnival geeks who earned their living by biting heads off live chickens..In spite of the thousands of hours that Paul was afoot, he seldom thought about why he walked. He met people along the way who asked, and he had answers for them, but he never knew if any answer might be the truth..find the detective's unlikely theory and persistent questioning to be tedious. "I seriously doubt that a dose of ipecac would produce such a violent response as in this case--not pharyngeal hemorrhage, for God's..By dawn, when the

intestinal paroxysms finally passed, this bold new man of adventure felt as flat and limp as road kill..His inner turmoil boiled ever more fiercely, and the external evidence of it grew more obvious. In the cool air of the fading afternoon, he perspired as profusely as a man already being strapped into an electric chair; it streamed, gushed. He shook, shook, and he was half convinced that he could hear his bones rattling together like the shells of hard-boiled eggs in a rolling cook pot..What good was she to anybody, what good could she ever hope to be, if she couldn't even save her little sister?.The barren white walls, the stark furniture starkly arranged, the rigorous exclusion of bric-a-brac and mementos: this resulted in the closest thing to a true monastic cell to be found outside of a monastery. The only quality of the apartment that identified it as a secular residence was its comfortable size, and if Industrial Woman had been replaced with a crucifix, even size might have been insufficient to rule out residence by some fortunate friar..Besides, he'd noticed a tendency among dopers to get maudlin, whereupon they sank into a confessional mood, seeking peace through rambling self-analysis and self-revelation. Junior was too private a person to behave in such a fashion. Furthermore, if drugs ever put him in a confessional mood, the consequence might be electrocution or poison gas, or lethal injection, depending on the jurisdiction and the year in which he fell into an unbosoming frame of mind..That happened ten years ago, the first and last time anyone shot at Nolly. The real work of a private eye had nothing in common with the glamorous stuff depicted on television and in books. This was a low-risk profession full of dull routine, as long as you chose your cases wisely--which meant staying away from clients like Enoch Cain..A siren in the city wailed toward St. Mary's. An ambulance. Through streets bustling with hope, always this lament for the dying.. "Because of a certain awareness you've had since childhood," Celestina said, recalling what he'd told her in San Francisco..She hung her head, covered her face with her chilled hands, and wondered how her mother could sustain faith in God when such terrible things could happen to someone as innocent as Phimie..The physician saw the look and understood it. A blush pinked his long, pale face. "Celestina, you're quite beautiful, and I'm sure you've learned to be wary of men, but I swear that my intentions are entirely honorable..".Wally Lipscomb parked in his garage, switched off the engine, and started to get out of the Buick before he saw that Celestina had left her purse in the car..Junior had learned implode from a self-help book about how to improve your vocabulary and be well-spoken. At the time, he had thought that this word-among others in the lists he memorized--was one he would never use. Now it was the perfect description of how he felt: as if he were going to implode..Jacob scared people. He was 'Edom's identical twin, with Edom's boyish and pleasant face, as soft-spoken as Edom, well barbered and neatly groomed. Nevertheless, on the same mission of mercy as Edom, Jacob would leave the pie recipients in a state of deep uneasiness if not outright terror. In his wake, they would bar the doors, load guns if they owned any, and lay sleepless for a night or two..As he turned the corner onto Jasmine Way, he felt his heart lift in expectation of the sight of his home. It wasn't a grand residence--a typical Main Street, USA, house--but it was more splendid to Paul than Paris, London, and Rome combined, cities that he would never see and would never regret failing to see..In the foyer, Hanna Rey and Nellie Oatis sat side by side on the stairs. Hanna, the housekeeper, was gray-haired and plump. Nellie, was Perri's daytime- companion, could have passed for Hanna's sister..If killing the wrong Bartholomew had broken a dam in Junior and released a lake of tension, whacking the right Bartholomew would set loose an ocean of pent-up stress, and he would feel free as he'd not felt since the fire tower. Freer than he'd been in his entire life..They were in the eastern hills, a mile from Jolene and Bill Klefton's place, where ten days ago, Edom had delivered blueberry pie along with the grisly details of the Tokyo-Yokohama quake of 1923..He had already reviewed twenty-four thousand names, finding no Bartholomew, putting red checks beside entries with the initial B instead of a first name. A slip of yellow paper marked his place..As Celestina and her mother loaded the last of the pies into the ice chests in the Suburban, Paul and Agnes came back from her station wagon at the head of the caravan..Either Obadiah intuited Agnes's fear or he was motivated by her kindness to reveal his method, after all. "I'm embarrassed to say what you saw wasn't real magician's work. Crude deception. I chose the ace of diamonds exactly because it represents wealth in fortune-telling, so it's a positive card that people respond well to. The ace with your boy's name was prepared beforehand, inserted face up toward the bottom of the deck, so a middle cut wouldn't reveal it..".Inevitably, man of the arts that he was, his slouching brought him to several galleries. In the window of the fourth, not one of his favorite establishments, he saw an eight-by-ten photograph of Seraphim White..He summoned enough courage to approach the nightstand. His hand trembled. He half expected the quarter to be illusory; to disappear between his pinching fingers, but it was real..When the police operator answered, Junior shrieked, "I've been shot! Jesus! Shot! Help me, an ambulance, oooohhhh shit! Hurry!". "They're all the family I have," Junior said with what he hoped sounded like sorrow and long-suffering love..lawn before they knew that the prodigy's invisible cloak wouldn't accommodate him as it did the girl. Cool, drenching rain pounded Tom at once, and he scooped Barty off the steps as Grace had gathered up..Her brothers' solemnity irritated Agnes. They appeared to be taking this reading seriously, as though it were far more than just a little after-dinner entertainment..This was a good night for television. To Tell the Truth at seven-thirty, followed by I've Got a Secret, The Lucy Show, and The Andy Griffith Show. The new Lucy wasn't quite as good as the old show; Paul and Perri missed Desi Arnaz and William Frawley.. "I don't know." He was silent a moment. "That's what's going to be interesting..".They agreed that to the outside world, Barty must continue to appear to be a sightless man--or otherwise either be treated like a freak or be subjected, perhaps unwillingly, to experimentation. In the modern world, there was no tolerance for miracles. Only family could be told of this development..She devoted half her work time to the neighbors-in-need route that Agnes had established and steadily expanded, the other half to her painting. She was in no rush to mount a new show; anyway, she didn't dare renew contact with the Greenbaum Gallery or with anyone at all from her past life, until the police found Enoch Cain..He switched off the flashlight and stood solemnly for a moment, paying his respects to Seraphim. She had been so sweet, so innocent, so supple, so exquisitely proportioned.. "Getting her into her shoes and coat sooner than Monday required a bribe," Wally said..With a thin hiss of disgust, Junior pulled away from the thing, whatever it was, withdrew the flashlight from his belt, and listened intently for sounds in the alleyway. No voices. No footsteps. Only distant traffic noises so muffled that they sounded like the grunts and groans and low menacing growls of foraging animals, displaced predators prowling the urban mist..Finally he switched on the light, and illuminated Neddy at ease, silent in death as never in life: lying on his back, head turned to the right, swollen tongue lolling obscenely.. "I'm not. I'm just going to be the conscience that Enoch Cain seems to have been born without..".THE SUN ROSE above clouds, above fog, and with the gray day came a silver drizzle. The city was lanced by needles of rain, and filth drained from it, swelling the gutters with a poisonous flood..Otter was reluctant to answer. He had to like Hound, but didn't have to trust him. "Shape-changing," he mumbled at last..Putting an arm around Paul's shoulders, Dr. Salk walked with him along a street lined with eucalyptuses and Torrey pines, to a

nearby pocket park. They sat on a bench in the sunshine and watched duck waddle on the shore of a man-made pond. By Sunday evening, a combination of factors—deep commitment to the philosophy of Zedd, explosive testosterone levels, boredom, self-pity, and a desire to be a risk-taking man of action once more—motivated Junior to splash a little Hai Karate behind each ear and go courting. Shortly after sunset, with a single red rose and a bottle of Merlot, he set off for Victoria Bressler's place. Although she was aware that these extraordinary events would shape the rest of her life, beginning with her actions in the hours immediately ahead of her, she could not clearly see what she ought to do next. At the core of her confusion was a conflict of mind and heart, reason and faith, but also a battle between desire and duty. Until she was Tom between curiosity and emotional exhaustion, Celestina held his gaze, thinking, and finally she said, "Deal." On Tuesday, January 2, Junior met with the drug dealer who had introduced him to Google, the document forger, and he arranged to purchase a 9-mm handgun with custom-machined silencer. Even on good days, when he wasn't hassled by the spirits of dead cops and wasn't prepping himself to commit murder, Junior sometimes grew uncomfortable in these bustling crowds. This afternoon, he felt especially claustrophobic as he shouldered through the throng—and admittedly paranoid, too. These past ten days had been the most difficult of her life, harder even than those following Joey's death. Back then, although she had lost a husband and a gentle lover and her best friend all at once, she'd had her undiminished faith, as well as her newborn son and all the promise of his future. She still had her precious boy, even though his future was to some extent blighted, and her faith remained with her, too, though diminished and offering less solace than before. In a red coat with a red hood, Bartholomew appeared first in the arms of the tall lanky man, the Ichabod Crane look-alike, who also had a large tote bag hanging from his shoulder. Besides, he wasn't on the Greenbaum Gallery customer list and didn't have an invitation. "You'll be out of ICU tomorrow, I bet. You'll have a phone, I'll call. And I'll come soon as I can." Two of her largest and best paintings were in the show windows, dramatically lighted. They were dazzling. They were dreadful. They were beautiful. They were hideous. "Which is?" His eyes widened, and his voice became husky with pretended fear. "They're always ... evil." Maintaining a brutal strangling pressure, Junior turned his head aside, to protect his eyes. He kned Neddy in the crotch, crunching the remaining fight out of him. The ball of sodden Kleenex was gripped so tightly in Junior's left hand that had its carbon content been higher, it would have been compacted into a diamond. He saw Vanadium staring at his clenched fist and sharp white knuckles. He tried to ease up on the wad of Kleenex, but he wasn't able to relent. The paramedic put aside the needle, having used it, and grabbed the paddles of a. Intuition told Tom Vanadium that the removal of the paintings was significant, but he wasn't a talented enough Sherlock to leap immediately to the meaning of their absence. Saturday morning, he walked to a drugstore in town and purchased eight decks of cards. With four, he passed the day re-creating, again and again, what he'd done at the dining-room table the previous evening. The four knaves never appeared. Less cautious than the typical accountant, perhaps mellow in this season of peace, Prosser opened the door without hesitation. "Are you all right?" he asked as he opened the passenger's door and helped her into the car. Her hands shook, her entire body shook, and in her mind was a hard clatter of fear like the wheels of a roller coaster rattling over poorly seamed tracks. slow breaths, and then she pointed at the windshield. "The hospital's that way." She got a can of soda, returned to the table, and sat down as if finished with her explorations. "You're okay, Barty." She figured that she could stay home, devoting herself to Barty, for perhaps three years before she would be wise to find work. An authoritative note came into Parkhurst's voice, that emperor-of- tone that probably was taught in a special medical-school course on intimidation, though he was striking this attitude a little too late to be entirely effective. "My patient is in a fragile state. He mustn't be agitated, Detective. I really don't want you questioning him until tomorrow at the earliest." Of firm but pliable rubber, custom-formed to his disfigured foot, a shoe insert filled the void left by his missing toe. This simple aid ensured that virtually all footwear was comfortable, and by November, Junior walked with no discernible limp. Retracing his path across the kitchen, he caught a faint whiff of jasmine from the backyard. Funny, jasmine here inside. Two paces later, he felt a draft.

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